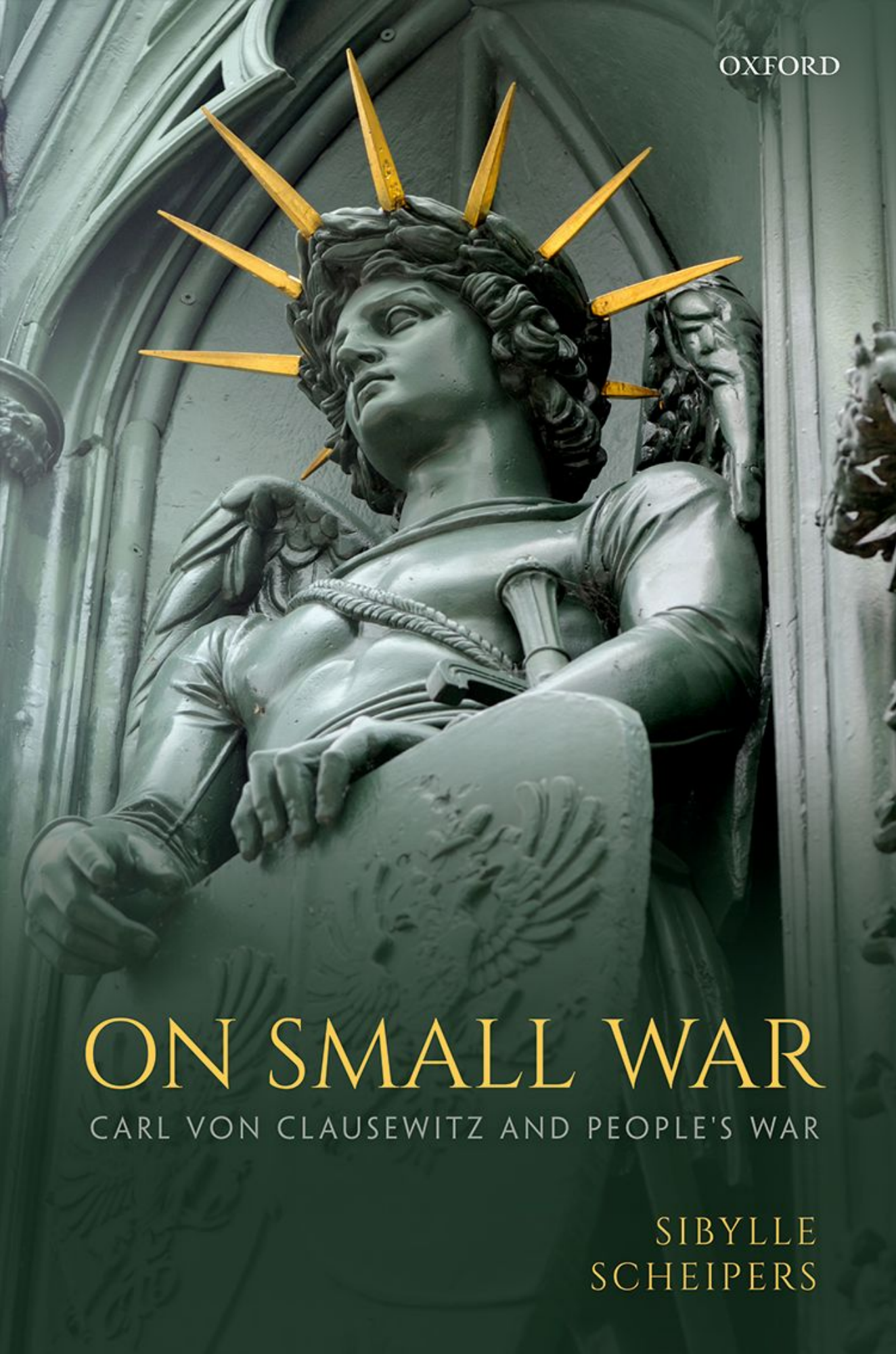

OXFORD

ON SMALL WAR

CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ AND PEOPLE'S WAR

SIBYLLE SCHEIPERS

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1

Introduction

> *Thus it is fair to say that the strategy of small war forms a part of tactics, and since the tactics of small war surely have to be part of tactics generally, small war in its entirety belongs to tactics, meaning that it presents a specific chapter thereof.*[1]

> *The individual Hussar or* Jäger *has an enterprising spirit, a confidence in himself and his luck that is foreign to the who always served with the line. […] Utmost courage and cautious prudence have to alternate according to the circumstances and each individual has to be equally adept at this adaptation. […] It is this free play of the spirit that takes place in small war, this skilful combination of courage and prudence (one may say this fortunate combination of audacity and apprehension) that makes small wars exceptionally interesting.*[2]

The above quotations from Carl von Clausewitz's lectures on small wars, which he delivered at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* in Berlin in 1810 and 1811, appear contradictory. On the one hand, he argued that small wars are not a specific form of war. Rather, they are part of an overall notion of war; and, since they represent a specific use of troops in combat (or in the preparation thereof), they are part of tactics. Clausewitz's starting point is, therefore, a unitary conception of war, in the framework of which all wars are defined by one basic, unifying feature: combat or at least the possibility of combat.[3] This is significant in as much as Clausewitz's perspective stands in stark contrast to post-cold-war strategic discourses, which are prone to presenting war in the framework of various dichotomies: small war versus big war, regular war versus irregular war, old wars versus new wars, and so on.

[1] Carl von Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg, Textfassung und Überarbeitung', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Werner Hahlweg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), i. 237.

[2] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 239.

[3] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 236; cf. Hew Strachan, *The Direction of War: Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 202–3.

On the other hand, small wars for Clausewitz appeared to possess an exemplary potential that seems to contradict their subordinate classification as a 'chapter' of tactics. Small wars seemed to encapsulate something that made their study worthwhile beyond their limited status as a subfield of tactics. In small wars, soldiers had to fight as individuals rather than as part of a rigid formation. Clausewitz defined their individuality as the result of their ability to combine 'courage and prudence' and 'audacity and apprehension'. In other words, they had to draw upon the full range of human faculties and integrate passion and reason in order to operate successfully.

The contrast between the two quotations is partly explained by the fact that Clausewitz lived at a 'watershed' moment at which the practice and the meaning of small war changed.[4] In his lectures on small wars, Clausewitz looked back at the eighteenth-century tradition of *petite guerre* or *kleiner Krieg*. This tradition understood small wars as partisan warfare—operations conducted by small detachments of light infantry and light cavalry in order to aid the overall purpose of the war. Partisan warfare had developed as a tactical complement to, or sometimes as a substitute for, operations by larger units. By the mid-eighteenth century, political, economic, and tactical developments had precipitated a paradoxical situation in European warfare: the size and the control of European armies had increased, while their actual value for waging war had decreased.[5] In these circumstances reliance on small mobile units of light infantry and light cavalry provided European states with increased room for manoeuvre. These units could either serve alongside regular units and take on tasks that regular forces struggled with, such as reconnaissance, or they could operate independently. In his lectures on small wars, Clausewitz referenced classics of partisan warfare such as his mentor Gerhard von Scharnhorst's 'pocket manual' for officers, as well as the writings of Johann von Ewald, Georg Wilhelm von Valentini, and Andreas Emmerich.[6]

At the same time, small wars in the form of people's war took on a new significance during Clausewitz's lifetime. As a member of the Prussian military reform movement, Clausewitz advocated a popular insurrection against Napoleonic occupation. Tactically, people's war drew on established methods of partisan warfare, such as raids, ambushes, and other small operations. Yet, in contrast to partisan warfare, people's war in Clausewitz's perspective could develop a genuine strategic impact. The Peninsular War (1808–14), during which small bands of guerrilla fighters imposed a heavy cost on the Napoleonic occupation of Spain, served as the prime example for the strategic potential of people's war.

[4] Beatrice Heuser, 'Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz: The Watershed between Partisan War and People's War', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33/1 (2010), 139–62.

[5] Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London, 1983), 11–12.

[6] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 445ff.

According to Clausewitz, it was not only the tactical repertoire that small wars offered that made them interesting. Rather, they also required and fostered certain qualities in those fighting them that rendered them exemplary for the study of war as such. It is telling in this respect that Clausewitz used the formula of the 'free play of the spirit' ('freies Spiel des Geistes') in the context of his lectures on small wars, since this formula was to recur in the famous opening chapter of *On War*, where he described the middle part of the trinity as 'the play of probabilities and chance that turned it [war] into a free activity of the soul' ('Spiel der Wahrscheinlichkeiten und des Zufalls, die ihn [den Krieg] zu einer freien Seelentätigkeit machen').[7] This similarity is not accidental. There are numerous instances in which notions and ideas that first appeared in the framework of Clausewitz's writings on small wars—both partisan warfare and people's war—found their way into his theory of war as presented in *On War*. The central aim of this book is to trace and analyse these instances and to demonstrate that Clausewitz developed his general theory of war from his early conception of small wars.

'MAHDI OF MASS', ADVOCATE OF THE PRIMACY OF POLICY, OR PRUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY?

The dominant interpretation of Clausewitz up to 1976 and partly beyond is one that restricts the relevance of his theory of war to major interstate wars. This interpretation came in two different and in fact paradoxical incarnations: Clausewitz as the mastermind of Imperial German militarism and Clausewitz as the paradigmatic advocate of the supremacy of policy over war and the military.

The depiction of Clausewitz as the mastermind of Imperial German militarism, chiefly associated with the British strategic theorist Basil Liddell Hart, painted him as the paradigmatic proponent of decisive battle, or *Vernichtungsschlacht*, as the sole means to victory in war. However, Liddell Hart's argument was more a reflection on the late-nineteenth-century reception of Clausewitz than on Clausewitz's writings themselves. German strategic thinkers such as Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, Colmar von der Goltz, and Friedrich von Bernhardi latched on to a highly selective reading of Clausewitz as a means to solve Imperial Germany's strategic dilemmas. In the framework

[7] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 213; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 89). All references to *Vom Kriege* refer to the edition by Werner Hahlweg (Bonn: Dümmler, 1980). References to the English translation refer to Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). I use my own translations throughout the book wherever appropriate.

of their debates, Clausewitz's abstract notion of 'absolute war' not only gained the status of an empirical phenomenon, but was also perceived as a military and political imperative.[8] But this meant that they rode roughshod over central aspects of Clausewitz's writings, most significantly the notion of war as an instrument of policy and defence as the stronger form of war.

The Imperial German interpretation of Clausewitz, in turn, influenced his reception in France. Raymond Aron took Ferdinand Foch to task for what he saw as Foch's ill-informed followership of Clausewitz. Just as Moltke, Goltz, and Bernhardi had done, Foch misunderstood the notion of absolute war as both a description of and a prescription for war at the beginning of the twentieth century, hence placing it in the context of what would become known as 'total war', Aron argued. Moreover, in a fashion similar to the German military thinkers before the First World War, Foch ignored Clausewitz's assessment of defence as the stronger side of war, hence contributing to the rise of the doctrine of the *offensive à outrance* in France.[9] Aron wrote of Foch that 'if he was a pupil [of Clausewitz], he was not a good one', but Foch's followership of Clausewitz has been disputed.[10] Foch's private documents show that he had read *On War* very carefully. Carefully enough, in fact, that Foch would not have considered himself a disciple of Clausewitz, inasmuch as he was well aware of the differences between Clausewitz and his own perspective on the requirements of strategy in the next European war.[11]

The same charge could be levelled against Liddell Hart's one-dimensional assessment of the Imperial German general staff and its alleged followership of Clausewitz. As Antulio J. Echevarria II has shown, pre-war strategic thinkers in Germany had fully appreciated the 'tactical crisis' that had been brought on by the advent of new battlefield technology in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their debates reflected the fact that they frantically searched for ways to resolve that crisis, rather than stubbornly latching on to Clausewitz's precepts. Even though 'decisive battle' seemed to be the answer for many, they were well aware that tactics and operational art had changed dramatically since the Napoleonic Wars. In this perspective, Liddell Hart's derision of Clausewitz as the 'Mahdi of Mass' and the culprit of the carnage of the First World War is doubly misplaced, inasmuch as the main actors of the pre-war debate were not really 'Clausewitzians'. Moreover, many of the tactical solutions they devised were never implemented or reflected in the training of the *Kaiserheer*.[12]

[8] Strachan, *European Armies*, 101ff. On the notion of 'absolute war', see Ch. 5, p. 120ff.

[9] Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976), 246ff.

[10] Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 249.

[11] Benoît Durieux, *Clausewitz en France: Deux siècles de réflexion sur la guerre, 1807–2007* (Paris: Economica, 2008), 192.

[12] Antulio J. Echevarria II, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers before the Great War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

While Moltke the Elder, Goltz, and Bernhardi were guilty of understanding Clausewitz's concept of absolute war as an unequivocal promotion of unlimited war, others saw a clear difference between Clausewitz's writings and the advocacy of total war. Erich Ludendorff, who had served as German Quartermaster General during the First World War and had popularized the notion of 'total war' in his 1935 publication *Der Totale Krieg*, explicitly criticized Clausewitz's theory of war. Ludendorff saw quite clearly that it was impossible to square total war with an instrumental notion of war: 'Clausewitz's theories have to be rejected in their entirety. War and policy serve the survival of a people, and war, in turn, is the superior expression of a people's will to live. Therefore policy has to be subordinate to war.'[13]

Even though Liddell Hart's devastating judgement on Clausewitz was based on a superficial and sometimes manifestly erroneous reading of *On War* (partly echoed by Liddell Hart's contemporary J. F. C. Fuller), it loomed large and had a lasting impact on the British Clausewitz reception.[14] Its net effect was to render any serious broader engagement with Clausewitz in the British strategic community impossible until after the Second World War.[15] This picture was paralleled by the situation in the United States. While Clausewitz had not been subject to a character assassination akin to that of Liddell Hart's in Britain, he was not widely read before the Second World War. Naval strategists such as George J. Meyers did engage with Clausewitz's writings. However, the US army and its educational institutions hardly took any note of him. This situation partly changed with the arrival of German expatriates who fled to the United States in order to avoid Nazi persecution, most important among them Herbert Rosinski and Hans Rothfels (more on whom later in this chapter). Yet, the expatriates' influence on the wider strategic debate remained limited, not least owing to the impression that they monopolized the field of Clausewitz studies without necessarily intending to enter into a level exchange with the US establishment of strategic thinkers and military practitioners. Hans Rothfels' chapter on Clausewitz in Edward Mead Earle's 1943 volume *Makers of Modern Strategy* was a rare indication of some kind of exchange between US strategic thinkers and German expatriate experts.[16]

[13] Erich Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg* (Munich: Ludendorff's Verlag, 1935), 10. See also Jan Willem Honig, 'The Idea of Total War: From Clausewitz to Ludendorff', in *The Pacific War as Total War: Proceedings of the 2011 International Forum on War History* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defence Studies, 2012), 29–41.

[14] J. F. C. Fuller, *Machine Warfare: An Inquiry into the Influence of Mechanics on the Art of War* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1943).

[15] Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 128ff.

[16] Hans Rothfels, 'Clausewitz', in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to Hitler*, ed. Edward Mead (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), 93–113. See also Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 177ff.

The onset of the cold war and the concomitant advent of nuclear strategy were a watershed moment in the Clausewitz reception on both sides of the Atlantic. They undoubtedly led to a rediscovery of Clausewitz. While this rediscovery did not challenge the interpretation of Clausewitz as the paradigmatic thinker of 'big' interstate war, it ironically resurrected Clausewitz in a fashion that was diametrically opposed to his reputation as the mastermind of Imperial German militarism. Clausewitz was perceived no longer as the apologist of absolute war as total war, but rather as the proponent of the primacy of political decision-making over war and strategy. It was Bernard Brodie who inaugurated this new interpretation of Clausewitz in a 1946 edited volume entitled *The Absolute Weapon*. 'Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose,' Brodie wrote.[17] It was hence all the more essential that governments asserted their control over military means and imposed rationality on their use, which, in the nuclear age, effectively meant ensuring their non-use.[18]

Samuel P. Huntington reiterated this point in his classical 1957 book entitled *The Soldier and the State*. According to Huntington, the ideal of civil–military relations was one of 'objective control': the armed forces, as professionals in violence, ought to be subjected to civilian control and decision-making. For Huntington, Clausewitz was the paradigmatic proponent of this ideal.[19] Huntington's emphasis on political control over the military and the strictly instrumental quality of war chimed with the strategic context of the cold war. For one, the use of nuclear weapons, should it ever occur, would be primarily decided upon by policymakers, not by generals. But, even in military confrontations well below the level of a nuclear exchange, the threat of escalation had upped the stakes to such an extent that an increase of political control over military operations seemed essential. The experience of the Korean War (1950–3) and General Douglas MacArthur's unauthorized attempts at intensifying the war effort illustrated that fears about unchecked military escalation were not unfounded. MacArthur's declaration that 'we

[17] Bernard Brodie (ed.), *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1946), 76. Cf. Antulio J. Echevarria II, 'The Cold War Clausewitz: Reconsidering the Primacy of Policy in *On War*', in *Clausewitz: The State and War*, ed. Andreas Herberg-Rothe, Jan Willem Honig, and Daniel Moran (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 130ff.

[18] One of the founding fathers of French nuclear doctrine, General Pierre Marie Gallois, made a related point: with the evolution of nuclear strategy towards mutually assured destruction, war had lost all rational qualities. Pierre M. Gallois, 'The Raison d'Être of French Defence Policy', *International Affairs*, 39/4 (1963), 497–510; cf. Durieux, *Clausewitz en France*, 551.

[19] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); see also Hew Strachan, 'Clausewitz en anglais: La Césure de 1976', in *École pratique* De la guerre? *Clausewitz et la pensée stratégique contemporaine*, ed. Laure Bardiès and Martin (Paris: Economica, 2008), 94–122.

must win. There is no substitute for victory' seemed like an uncanny echo of the pre-First World War apostles of 'decisive battle'.[20] Limited war, a concept mainly put forward by Robert Osgood, re-emphasized the instrumental character of war and its subjection to tight political control. War had to be rational and tightly geared towards achievable political aims in order to prevent escalation towards an all-out nuclear exchange. Clausewitz, once misunderstood as the champion of 'total war', was now propped up as the guardian against total nuclear war.[21]

In this intellectual climate, Michael Howard and Peter Paret published a new translation of *On War*, which was to become the standard translation in the English-speaking world. It is thoroughly influenced by the reading of Clausewitz as the proponent of war as an instrument of policy. Howard and Paret's translation supported this reading in several ways: first, following Eberhard Kessel and Herbert Rosinski, they dated an undated note, in which Clausewitz wrote that the manuscript that he had so far completed represented 'nothing but a collection of materials from which a theory of war was to have been distilled' to 1830. Crucially, Clausewitz also wrote in that same note that he regarded only the first chapter of book I as finished.[22] Were Howard and Paret's dating of this note accurate, this would mean that Clausewitz wrote the note when he was in the process of storing away his manuscript and preparing to leave for Breslau, where he took up the post of chief of staff of the Prussian army under Gneisenau's command. Since Clausewitz died in Breslau in 1831 without having had a chance to return to his manuscript, the note would indicate that Chapter 1 of book I, which contains the trinity and extensively discusses war as an instrument of policy, is Clausewitz's final legacy. The dating of this note to 1830 has been thoroughly disputed in the meantime, and it seems much more likely that Clausewitz wrote this note in the autumn of 1826 or the spring of 1827, which would indicate that he had had much more time to revise his manuscript in its entirety.[23]

Secondly, a strong emphasis on the primacy of policy and the instrumental quality of war is also detectable in the translation itself. The German notion of

[20] Douglas MacArthur, Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 19 April 1951, quoted in D. Clayton James, *Refighting the Last War: Command and Crisis in Korea 1950–1953* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 51.

[21] Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Security* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957). Cf. Antulio J Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85ff.

[22] Clausewitz, 'Unfinished Note, Presumably Written in 1830', *On War*, 70.

[23] Cf. Strachan, 'Clausewitz en anglais', 96; Azar Gat, *History of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 255ff. See also Anders Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy: Following Clausewitz's Train of Thought', Ph.D. thesis, National Defence University, Helsinki, 2014. Palmgren convincingly argues that what Clausewitz referred to as Chapter 1 of book I, in the undated note was in fact what was to become Chapter 2 of book I, 'Purpose and Means in War', in the posthumous publication of *On War*. Cf. Ch. 5, p. 123.

Politik embodies both the concept or policy and politics. Howard and Paret mostly chose to render *Politik* as 'policy', thereby giving the term a strongly rationalist spin. In other instances, the translation updated Clausewitz's vocabulary by substituting historical terms such as *Hof*, royal court, with 'government'. In contrast, the translation downplayed the role of passion and emotions in war. Where Clausewitz used the word *Geist*, a term that integrates both rational and sensual faculties, Howard and Paret's translation reads 'intellect', hence reinforcing a highly rationalist reading of the original text. Moreover, Howard and Paret paid scant attention to those parts of *On War* that dealt with partisan warfare, people's war, and the creation of a *Landsturm*. Apparently oblivious to the fact that Clausewitz was well aware that *Parteigänger* (partisans) and the arming of the people belonged to different historical and intellectual traditions, Howard and Paret placed both variably in the context of small unit tactics, guerrilla warfare, or the raising of local militias.[24]

As a result of the cold-war interpretation of Clausewitz, which emphasized the instrumental character of war, government control, and rationality in the use of armed force as the highest ideal, Clausewitz's works did not travel well into the post-cold-war world. A number of scholars declared Clausewitz's theory of war outmoded and ill-suited to the twenty-first century. John Keegan, Martin van Creveld, and Mary Kaldor criticized Clausewitz's alleged rationalism. Martin van Creveld argued that, already with the onset of the cold war, wars had become 'non-Clausewitzian' and 'non-trinitarian', in so far as most wars fought after 1945 were 'low-intensity conflicts' fought by non-state actors. Mary Kaldor declared that 'new wars' dominated the post-cold-war era. These 'new wars', according to Kaldor, differed sharply from the 'old' regular interstate wars inasmuch as they were waged by non-state actors pursuing mainly 'irrational', a-strategic, and identity-related aims.[25]

While the perception of Clausewitz as the paradigmatic thinker of major interstate war was thus the dominant interpretation for almost a century, alternative readings of Clausewitz had emerged throughout this period. Marxist revolutionaries read Clausewitz, because, like him, they were interested in the role of the people in war. Both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were

[24] Strachan, 'Clausewitz en anglais', 102ff.

[25] John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993); Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991); Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999); cf. Christopher Bassford, 'John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz', *War in History*, 1/3 (1994), 319–36; Bart Schuurman, 'Clausewitz and the "New Wars" Scholars', *Parameters*, 40/1 (2010), 89–100. More recently Kaldor has published an attempt to reinterpret Clausewitz so as to make him relevant to the analysis of 'new wars', arguing that new wars are 'instrumental and rational, but not reasonable'. Yet, her reinterpretation suffers from new misunderstandings of Clausewitz—for instance, when she equates small wars with limited wars. Mary Kaldor, 'Inconclusive Wars: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant in these Global Times?', *Global Policy*, 1/3 (2010), 271, 273.

familiar with Clausewitz's writings. Clausewitz's advocacy of people's war chimed with their hopes for a revolution led by the industrial proletariat. Reinterpreted through the lens of historical materialism, war was at the same time existential and instrumental for Engels: war was a continuation of *Politik*, but *Politik* was understood as the historically specific configuration of all economic, social, and political forces in their entirety.[26] Lenin encountered Clausewitz's writings in 1914. He filled a jotter, a so-called *Tetradka*, with excerpts and comments from his reading. The *Tetradka* shows that Lenin, like Engels, latched on to the formula of war as a continuation of *Politik*, again understood in the sense of the historically specific class relations. In so far as *Politik* was hence intrinsically antagonistic, the boundaries between *Politik* and war became fuzzy.[27]

Mao Zedong reportedly also read Clausewitz, though it is much less clear what edition and translation he had access to. The French Marxist intellectual André Glucksmann was the first to posit Clausewitz's influence on Mao. According to Glucksmann, Mao merged the Clausewitzian notion of defence as the stronger form of war with an exclusive focus on people's war, hence arriving at something akin to a 'universal doctrine' of revolutionary warfare.[28] However, Mao himself seemed intent on breaking with the Marxist interpretation of Clausewitz, according to which war was not merely a continuation of *Politik*, but the supreme expression of class conflict.[29]

But not only Marxist revolutionaries discovered Clausewitz as the thinker of existential war. In 1918 Hans Rothfels, who later formed part of a circle of German émigré Clausewitzians in the United States, published a book entitled *Carl von Clausewitz: Politik und Krieg*, which was based on his Ph.D. thesis written under the supervision of Friedrich Meinecke. The aim of Rothfels's book was to show that Clausewitz's theory of war had its roots in his engagement with the philosophy of German Idealism, which found its clearest expression in Clausewitz's early writings on people's war and the institutions of the *Landsturm* and *Landwehr*: 'Most importantly the position of the book *On War* in the history of ideas will become clear, the continuity of the intellectual development it represents, the blood bond that links it to the *Weltanschauung* and politics of German Idealism', Rothfels wrote in his foreword.[30] Rothfels was

[26] Olaf Rose, *Carl von Clausewitz: Wirkungsgeschichte seines Werkes in Rußland und der Sowjetunion, 1836–1991* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 90ff.

[27] Werner Hahlweg, 'Lenin und Clausewitz: Ein Beitrag zur politischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, part 1', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 36 (1954), 30–59; Rose, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 98ff.

[28] André Glucksmann, 'Politics and War in the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung', *New Left Review*, 49/1 (1968), 41–57; cf. Durieux, *Clausewitz en France*, 575.

[29] This is a point that Mao reportedly made during a visit of the West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt to Beijing in 1975, quoted in Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz* (London: Pimlico, 2002), 141.

[30] Hans Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz: Politik und Krieg* (Bonn: Dümmler, 1918), p. viii.

a nationalist conservative rather than a Nazi, but his book, even though it remains almost 100 years after its publication probably the most outstanding treatment of Clausewitz and the existential character of war, is interlaced with echoes of a nationalist and vitalist discourse that was widespread in interwar Germany and presaged the way in which Nazi thinkers understood Clausewitz. His vitalist interpretation of Clausewitz was one that the Nazi perception could latch on to. In his unapologetically politically driven edition of a selection of Clausewitz's writings entitled *Geist und Tat*, Walter Malmsten Schering wrote: 'To sum up: we have to see Clausewitz not as a philosopher of war, as soldiers have referred to Clausewitz for a long time, but as a philosopher of action.'[31]

After the Second World War, the German national–conservative thinker Carl Schmitt revisited Clausewitz's legacy in his 1963 *Theory of the Partisan*. For Schmitt, the Clausewitz of the reform years signified the archetype of the partisan motivated by what Schmitt called 'real enmity'. In contrast to the conventional enemy, who fights on behalf of a state, the real enemy fights against the state, from within and from below. Schmitt constructs a seamless continuity from Clausewitz's notion of partisan warfare via his analysis of people's war to the formula of war as a continuation of *Politik*: 'Schmitt clarifies Clausewitz's point [the formula] as meaning that war and politics are intertwined concepts, that peace contains the possibility of enmity and hence war, and that the clear distinction made by *jus publicum europaeum* between war and peace becomes blurred.'[32] But Schmitt forced his own interpretation on Clausewitz: by labelling Clausewitz's advocacy of a people's war against Napoleon as *partisan* warfare, he rides roughshod over the distinction between the two forms of war, of which Clausewitz was well aware. Schmitt reconstructs the notion of the partisan as the *Parteigänger*—literally a member of a party—in order to illustrate the genuinely political nature of the partisan. This is a partly ahistorical reinterpretation of Clausewitz's notion: for the young Clausewitz, the *Parteigänger* was a member of a party—not a political one, but rather a party in the sense of a small detached military unit. Only in Clausewitz's post-1815 writings, the *Parteigänger* emerged as a figure involved in party politics.[33] Moreover, the enmity of Clausewitz the partisan is for Schmitt, though real, not boundless: he reconstructs Clausewitz as a

[31] Walter Malmsten Schering, in *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat: Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers*, ed. Malmsten Schering (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1941), p. xi. Schering fuses the existential dimension of war with the late-nineteenth-century interpretation of Clausewitz as the proponent of the offensive.

[32] Gabriella Slomp, 'The Theory of the Partisan: Carl Schmitt's Neglected Legacy', *History of Political Thought*, 26/3 (2005), 513. Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen: Zwischenbemerkungen zum Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963); see also Carl Schmitt, 'Clausewitz als politischer Denker: Bemerkungen und Hinweise', *Der Staat*, 6/4 (1967), 887–918.

[33] Cf. Ch. 4, p. 87.

conservative apologist of the state who fought against Napoleon's imperialism.[34] Schmitt is correct in so far as Clausewitz abandoned the Prussian state in order to save it in the absence of decisive action of the Prussian king. Yet, in 1812 Clausewitz did not do so with a view to saving the *jus publicum europaeum*, as Schmitt implied, even though safeguarding the European balance of power became increasingly important to him in his mature years.[35]

The year 1976 also saw the publication of two seminal works on Clausewitz that presented a richer reading of his life and work than the standard cold-war reading of Clausewitz. In his seminal intellectual biography of Clausewitz, Paret followed an approach that is much more conscious of the importance of the historical context than is reflected in the Howard–Paret translation of *On War*. Paret acknowledged the importance of small wars and people's war, in particular, for the Clausewitz of the reform years. At the same time, he argued that, after 1815, Clausewitz abandoned the radicalism of his reform years and adopted a much more Machiavellian, 'realist' outlook on international politics.[36] This meant that Paret presupposed a break between the Clausewitz of the reform years and the Clausewitz who began writing the first drafts of *On War* in 1816. According to this perspective, small wars and people's war, though of great importance in Clausewitz's younger years, had no significant impact on the writing of *On War*.

The other seminal publication was Raymond Aron's *Penser la guerre*.[37] Like Paret, Aron recognized that Clausewitz had profound theoretical and practical knowledge of small wars, even though Aron gave little thought to the difference between partisan warfare and people's war.[38] He also acknowledged that passion and emotions were essential to Clausewitz's theory of war. Yet, his interpretation of *On War* remained firmly wedded to an understanding of war as an instrument of *Politik*. For Aron, Clausewitz's 'formula' of war as the continuation of *Politik* by other means was not so much descriptive or analytical; it was prescriptive, in particular against the backdrop of the cold war: 'war should be the continuation of politics by other means, with politics referring to the intelligence of the personified state acting as the trustee of collective interest. This is the only guarantee against a nuclear holocaust.'[39]

[34] Cf. William Hooker, *Carl Schmitt's International Thought: Order and Orientation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 172ff.

[35] Cf. Ch. 4, p. 108ff.

[36] Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State: The Man, his Theories and his Times* (1976; 2nd edn, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[37] Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*; French edn, *Penser la guerre: Clausewitz* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

[38] Aron used the terms 'partisan' and 'guerrilla' interchangeably (*Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 308).

[39] Murielle Cozette, 'Reading Clausewitz: Raymond Aron's Interpretation of *On War*', in *Clausewitz*, ed. Herberg-Rothe, Honig, and Moran, 126.

While both Paret and Aron hence understood Clausewitz as a thinker of both small and large wars, their interpretations nonetheless remained firmly rationalist and faithful to the dominant cold-war approach to Clausewitz. More thoroughly integrative approaches to Clausewitz's thought emerged only after the end of the cold war. The reception of Clausewitz since 2000 has continued the appreciation of Clausewitz as a thinker of small wars, as well as of large wars. It acknowledged that Clausewitz himself did not subscribe to a binary view of war that distinguishes between these two as fundamentally different forms of war. Rather, Clausewitz based his theory of war on a unitary vision of war. Hew Strachan has called attention to the existential dimension of war in Clausewitz's thought, which the cold-war interpretation had almost completely neglected.[40] Echevarria has argued that small wars have a central place in Clausewitz's theory of war: even though it is essentially combat centric, this includes the threat of combat as well as the selective use of force with the intention of influencing the political climate, hence manipulating one's own and the opponent's moral forces.[41] Andreas Herberg-Rothe has pointed out that Clausewitz's analysis of small wars was essential to his theorizing of war's tendency towards escalation and his conceptualization of the relationship of defence and attack.[42]

Yet, neither Echevarria nor Herberg-Rothe neatly distinguishes between partisan warfare and people's war, and both tend to use the notion of 'partisan' and 'insurgent/guerrilla' interchangeably.[43] In contrast, Beatrice Heuser has drawn attention to precisely this distinction. According to Heuser, Clausewitz lived at a 'watershed moment' between the eighteenth-century tradition of small war as partisan warfare—understood in the sense of a tactical complement to large war—and the nascent nineteenth-century understanding of small war as people's war.[44] Inasmuch as the latter pointed towards a general insurrection and the involvement of all parts of society in the defence of their country, people's war could evolve into something that was not 'small' at all; on the contrary, it displayed acute tendencies towards 'absolute' war, even

[40] Hew Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's* On War*: A Biography* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2007), 180ff. On the Clausewitz and the existential quality of war, see also Herfried Münkler, *Über den Krieg: Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegel ihrer theoretischen Reflexion* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2003), 91ff.

[41] Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 136ff.

[42] Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle: The Political Theory of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42ff, 112. See also Herberg-Rothe, 'The State and the Existential View of War', in *Clausewitz*, ed. Herberg-Rothe, Honig, and Moran, 71–86.

[43] This tendency is also prevalent in Sebastian Kaempf's article on Clausewitz and small wars, in which he writes that 'during Clausewitz's time, small wars arose as a new phenomenon caused by the sociopolitical transformations of the American (1775–83) and the French Revolutions as well as the Napoleonic Wars (1789–1815)', thereby completely ignoring the eighteenth-century *petite guerre* tradition. Sebastian Kaempf, 'Lost through Non-Translation: Bringing Clausewitz's Writings on "New Wars" back in', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 22/4 (2011), 548–73.

[44] Heuser, 'Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz'. See also Beatrice Heuser (ed.), *Small Wars in Theory and Practice, 1500–1850* (London: Routledge, 2016).

though it was still fought with small-war tactics rather than big battles.[45] Christopher Daase and James W. Davis have followed Heuser and contextualized their translation of Clausewitz's lectures on small wars, which delivered at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* in Berlin in 1810 and 1811, in precisely that transitional 'watershed' moment between partisan warfare and people's war.[46]

While these contributions on the question of the relevance of small wars for Clausewitz have gone a long way to challenge the perception of Clausewitz as the paradigmatic thinker of major interstate war, they do not address the issue of how exactly Clausewitz's thinking on small war fed into his theory of war more broadly. Among the more recent publications on Clausewitz, only one explicitly claims to explore the links between Clausewitz's thinking on small wars and *On War*. According to Jon Tetsuro Sumida, Clausewitz's entire theory of war hinges on his insight that defence is the stronger form of war. Sumida seeks the roots of this central theme in Clausewitz's understanding of what he calls 'guerrilla war': 'I relate guerrilla war to major concepts and to Clausewitz's primary argument [that defence is the stronger form of war], presenting his explanation of the topic as a critical component of his thought.'[47] Alas, Sumida mentions Clausewitz's central writings on small wars, such as his lectures at the *Kriegsschule* and the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* only in passing, and when he does, he relies on quotes from secondary sources.[48] Moreover, he does not appreciate the categorical difference between partisan warfare and people's war. Finally, Sumida's failure to consult Clausewitz's writings on small war in any depth prevents him from engaging with Clausewitz's intellectual context. In fact, Sumida presents Clausewitz as an entirely idiosyncratic thinker: 'What he had to say to the world was not drawn principally from books or from discourse with learned colleagues, but from his own observations and reflections on personal combat, supreme command and high politics.'[49]

Yet, both in his writings on partisan warfare and in his reflections on people's war, Clausewitz engaged with 'books' and 'learned colleagues', even

[45] Cf. Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 973; bk. VIII, ch. 3B (*On War*, 593).

[46] *Clausewitz on Small War*, ed. and trans. Christopher Daase and James W. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). The translation is not without problems, though; see Sibylle Scheipers, 'Book Review of *Clausewitz on Small War*', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27/2 (2016), 345–9; Christopher Daase and James W. Davis, 'Response to Sibylle Scheipers', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27/2 (2016), 349–53. Note that, in an earlier essay on 'Clausewitz and Small Wars', Daase had not distinguished between the two traditions: Christopher Daase, 'Clausewitz and Small Wars', in *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 182–95.

[47] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to* On War (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 5.

[48] Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, 92. Interestingly Sumida did not seem to be aware of the translation of the first two parts of the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* included in *Carl von Clausewitz: Historical and Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 285–303.

[49] Tetsuro Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, 176.

though he did not always explicitly reference them. As the next section highlights, the aim of this book is to reconstruct Clausewitz's analysis of small wars against the backdrop of his contemporary intellectual and historical context. This will not only allow us to gain a deeper understanding of this analysis itself; it will also lead to more profound insights into how this analysis fed into Clausewitz's theory of war.

CLAUSEWITZ IN CONTEXT

Throughout the two centuries of Clausewitz reception, there has been a tendency to interpret his writings with a view to the interpreters' strategic context. This resulted in a selective and sometimes manifestly erroneous reading of his thought. At the other end of the spectrum were those who emphasized the contrast between Clausewitz's historical context and today's strategic situation and claimed that the world had entered into a 'post-Clausewitzian' age. This study seeks to avoid the pitfalls associated with both of these extreme positions. In order to understand the development and the substance of Clausewitz's thought, we have to study him against the backdrop of his contemporary historical and intellectual context, which is indeed quite different from ours. Consequently, his insights may have little direct relevance for today's strategic problems: Clausewitz's wisdom may indeed not be timeless.

Clausewitz was born on 1 June 1780 into a family whose noble heritage was disputed. His father, Friedrich Gabriel, had served in Frederick II's army and had fought in the Seven Years War. Carl grew up in Burg near Magdeburg and joined the Prussian military at the age of 12. He fought in Prussia's Rhine campaigns in 1793 and 1794 with the 34th Infantry Regiment. In 1795 the regiment was transferred to its garrison in Neuruppin, where Clausewitz stayed for six years until he entered the newly established *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* in Berlin in 1801.

Throughout his life, Clausewitz was an avid reader and a largely self-studied thinker, thereby compensating for a lack of formal education in his early life. In 1807, he wrote to his then fiancée (and later wife), Marie von Brühl:

> Take into account that I am a son of the military camp, the real one, that is, not one from Schiller's poetic world like Max Piccolomini. […] I could have turned out worse, I grant you that; however, the protection of a diligent education, under the guidance of a worthy friend, could have conferred a purer content upon my background, could have developed my intellectual strengths more thoroughly and could have equipped me with knowledge and an aesthetic education.[50]

[50] Karl Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz: Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern* (Berlin: Verlag Martin Warneck, 1916), 83. On Clausewitz's early education, see also Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 36ff.

Even though Clausewitz was entirely honest about his lack of a formal education in early life, the ease with which he slipped in a reference to Schiller's *Wallenstein* illustrates that, at the age of 27, he was well educated. The fact that he had eventually found that 'worthy friend' in Gerhard von Scharnhorst, who was Clausewitz's instructor at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* in Berlin between 1801 and 1804 and became his lifelong mentor, had played a large part in this. Scharnhorst imbued Clausewitz with a fiercely critical theoretical perspective and an acute sense for the relevance of history for the study of war.[51]

Marie von Brühl, whom Clausewitz married in 1810, was another important source of cultural and philosophical education. In 1787, her father, Charles von Brühl, became the governor of the Prussian crown prince, the later Frederick William III. In contrast to Carl, Marie had enjoyed a full education; she spoke French and English fluently and had taken lessons in history and fine arts.[52] In the above-cited 1807 letter to Marie, Clausewitz promised her that he would catch up with whatever cultural education he might be lacking: 'wherever you find me wanting, I will soon improve in your proximity and under the influence of your entire noble being.'[53]

Having excelled as a student at the *Kriegsschule*, Clausewitz was selected to serve as *aide-de-camp* to Prince August. After the Prussian defeat at Jena and Auerstedt on 14 October 1806, Clausewitz was taken captive and transferred to France alongside Prince August. During their time in France they visited Paris. Clausewitz, urged on by Marie, went to picture galleries and studied the paintings of Rubens and Raphael, but he reported back to his fiancée that his lack of knowledge of the fine arts prevented him from finding immediate intellectual access to them.[54] On another occasion, Marie seemed to have urged Clausewitz to take up an instrument, to which he replied that he had regretfully no talent at all for music.[55]

After the conclusion of the Peace of Tilsit on 9 July 1807, Prince August was granted permission to return to Prussia. The prince and Clausewitz travelled via Switzerland and were forced to stay for two months at the château Coppet near Geneva, the residence of the Franco-Swiss writer and socialite Germaine de Staël, while they awaited the arrival of their travel documents. The stay at Coppet brought Clausewitz into contact with the romantic literary critic August Wilhelm Schlegel, who stayed at Coppet as tutor to Staël's sons. Schlegel had lived in Göttingen and Jena and was thoroughly integrated into the German enlightenment and post-enlightenment context. He was acquainted with Wilhelm von Humboldt and familiar with the works of Herder, Kant,

[51] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 71.

[52] Vanya Eftimova Bellinger, *Marie von Clausewitz: The Woman behind the Making of* On War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 13ff.

[53] Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 83.

[54] Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 108.

[55] Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 110.

and Winckelmann. During his time in Jena, he had been a close friend and collaborator of Friedrich Schiller, even though they fell out in 1797. In Coppet, Clausewitz also met the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who ran an internationally renowned institute in Yverdon near Coppet. The encounter with Pestalozzi had a lasting influence on Clausewitz. Pestalozzi's ideas clearly struck a chord with Clausewitz, whose own thirst for education had driven him through years of self-study in the absence of more formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and intellectual skills. In his years as a member of the Prussian reform movement, Clausewitz saw education as a central pillar of reform. Education was for him the precondition and path to the emancipation of the individual in the widest sense.[56]

Between his return to Berlin in 1808 and his resignation from Prussian service in 1812 in order to join the Russian forces' fight against Napoleon, Clausewitz spent most of his time combining study, lecturing, and conceptual planning in the framework of the Prussian reform movement. His time in Berlin was probably intellectually highly stimulating: in spite of—or possibly precisely because of—Prussia's increasingly hopeless political situation, cultural life and public discourse flourished in Berlin. On 15 October 1810, Wilhelm von Humboldt founded the *Universität zu Berlin* (later to be renamed the *Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität* and then *Humboldt-Universität*). Among the inaugural professors were the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who held a chair in theology, and the historian and legal theorist Friedrich Carl von Savigny. These three, along with the poets Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, were also members of the *Christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft*, founded in 1811, of which Clausewitz too was a member. The large presence of university professors alongside artists, members of the aristocracy, the military, and the state bureaucracy reflects that the *Tischgesellschaft* embodied the ideal of an educated and meritocratic society.[57] In comparison with other contemporary 'societies', the *Tischgesellschaft* was 'more exclusive and more open at the same time' in that it drew upon the elites from a heterogeneous variety of social and professional backgrounds.[58] It was patriotic, anti-French, and anti-Napoleonic, and often anti-Semitic, but at the same time its members were largely socially progressive and in favour of political reform.

In December 1810, Clausewitz and his fiancée, Marie von Brühl, were married in Berlin. Clausewitz had gained access to members of the royal court during his tenure as Prince August's *aide-de-camp*—a coincidence that

[56] Cf. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 207–8. The importance of education was, of course, central to the thought of many of Clausewitz's contemporaries: Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, and Wilhelm von Humboldt.

[57] Stefan Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft* (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2003), 18.

[58] Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, 23.

had allowed him to meet Marie in the first place. Through their marriage, Clausewitz further consolidated his membership of these circles. Carl and Marie were personally acquainted with Queen Louise, Princess Louise Radziwiłł, and Baron vom Stein. They also visited the salon of Luise von Voss, where they met Wilhelm von Humboldt and Achim von Arnim—the latter was, of course, also the founder of the *Tischgesellschaft*. The members of Voss's salon were, like those of the *Tischgesellschaft*, both patriotic and reform-minded. They strongly supported the raiding mission carried out by major Franz von Schill and his hussar corps in 1809, during which Schill attempted to foment a popular uprising against Napoleon in Westphalia.[59]

Despite the evidence that Clausewitz moved in social and professional circles that were hubs of patriotism, the spirit of reform, and intellectual debate, the impact of this historical context has not received much attention. In his intellectual biography of Clausewitz, Paret presented a rich tapestry of Clausewitz's intellectual and social network, but Paret's take on Clausewitz's theory of war remains in many ways curiously detached from this evident exposure. Paret posited traces of a Kantian influence as well as post-Kantian themes echoing Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schiller, and Goethe in Clausewitz's writings. However, he cautioned that it is far from clear whether Clausewitz had read any of their works and held that it is much more likely that Clausewitz gleaned scraps of their thoughts from public lectures and debates in societies and salons.

We can be sure that Clausewitz attended lectures about Kantian philosophy delivered by Johann Gottfried Karl Kiesewetter. Kiesewetter lectured on logic and mathematics at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule*. Clausewitz deepened his study of Kant by also attending Kiesewetter's lectures in the *Pépinière*, the Prussian academy for army surgeons.[60] Kiesewetter, whom Marie referred to as 'the good town philosopher' ('der gute Stadtphilosoph') in one of her letters to Carl, also belonged to the Clausewitz's wider social circle.[61] Aron argued that it is indeed possible to trace a Kantian style in Clausewitz's writings, but claims that Clausewitz did not understand Kantian philosophy.[62] Rothfels is even more definitive when he claims 'that Kantian philosophy in any case was not among the decisive constitutive elements of Clausewitz's life and development'.[63] In contrast, Rothfels sees many more parallels between Clausewitz's thought and the central tenets of German Idealist philosophy and mentions explicitly Humboldt, Schiller, and Fichte. Yet, Rothfels emphasizes

[59] Bellinger, *Marie von Clausewitz*, 112. See also, e.g., Marie von Clausewitz in a letter to Carl von Clausewitz, 8 May 1809, in *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, ed. Linnebach.

[60] Erich Weniger, 'Philosophie und Bildung im Denken for Clausewitz', in *Schicksalswege deutscher Vergangenheit* ed. Walther Hubatsch (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1950), 141.

[61] Marie to Carl, 30 May 1809, in *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, ed. Linnebach, 238.

[62] Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 230.

[63] Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 25.

that Clausewitz's Idealism was much more practical and less escapist that that of Schiller, for instance.[64] Paret too argues that Clausewitz was under the impression of the *Sturm und Drang* movement rather than that of Kant or of German Idealism. However, Paret highlights the connection between Clausewitz and Fichte, even though he also emphasizes the differences between both men's perspective on history.[65]

The connection between Hegel and Clausewitz has also received a great amount of attention in Clausewitz scholarship. Bernard Brodie went so far as to argue that the link between Hegel and Clausewitz is stronger than that between Kant and Clausewitz, even though there is no evidence that Clausewitz ever read or met Hegel.[66] Azar Gat takes a more cautious approach: 'Clausewitz was not a Hegelian, but some of the opinions which he had held from his youth and which had dominated his intellectual milieu appear to have received a definitive and distinctive conceptualization under the influence of Hegel's ideas.'[67] Strachan highlights the parallels in Hegel's and Clausewitz's intellectual development, both of whom appreciated war as an existential expression of a political community before 1815, but pivoted to a more instrumental understanding of war in the 1820s.[68] Yourie Courmier claims to have found definitive parallels in Hegel's and Clausewitz's approach to method, but equally highlights the broad divergences in their ethical world views, the epitome of which were their divergent interpretations of the historical figure of Napoleon.[69]

In sum, Clausewitz scholars are divided over who had or had not a definitive 'influence' on Clausewitz. What seems clear is that, even though Clausewitz lived at a time of vibrant intellectual and political debate and it would be far from plausible to assume that he did not take any note of it, Clausewitz did not become the disciple of any form of 'ism', be it Kantianism, German Idealism, Romanticism, or Hegelianism. That is not to say that Clausewitz was a quasi-romantic genius who created his theory of war in intellectual isolation. But he was an autonomous and partly idiosyncratic thinker who engaged with the ideas of others in order to develop them further and to integrate them into his thinking on war. This, in conjunction with the fact that he rarely referenced others' works, makes it difficult to reconstruct Clausewitz's intellectual context. The next section discusses the methodological answers to the dilemmas posed by this situation.

[64] Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 77.

[65] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 177ff. See also Peter Paret, 'Machiavelli, Fichte, and Clausewitz in the Labyrinth of German Idealism', *Etica & Politica*, 17/3 (2015), 78–95.

[66] Bernard Brodie, 'On Clausewitz: A Passion for War: Review of *Clausewitz: A Biography*, by Roger Parkinson', *World Politics*, 25/2 (1973), 290.

[67] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 243.

[68] Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's* On War, 91ff.

[69] Youri Courmier, 'Hegel and Clausewitz: Convergence on Method, Divergence on Ethics', *International History Review*, 36/3 (2014), 419–42.

METHOD: FROM 'INFLUENCE' TO 'DIALOGUE'

The classic approach to the history of ideas and political philosophy is to construct its object of study as a canon of great texts that address transhistoric, universal problems. In this model, pre-eminent thinkers are perceived as agents. Their ideas influenced those who came after them. In other words, the classics were seen as the proverbial giants on whose shoulders later generations had to stand.[70] It was the American literary critic Harold Bloom who attacked this view of built-in 'influence' of the classics in his seminal book *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973).[71] According to Bloom, it was a grave mistake to presuppose a monodirectional flow of a historical current of ideas from the classics to modernity. Rather, he argued, men's narcissistic motivations drove them to challenge, outdo, and ultimately overtake their immediate precursors. In other words, rather than stand on the shoulders of giants, poets were at pains to build their own tower, and aimed to build it higher than that of their predecessors.

At the same time as Bloom published his *Anxiety of Influence*, the classic approach to the history of ideas came under attack from post-structuralist reconceptualizations of the possibility of creating meaning and understanding. Post-structuralist thinkers such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida suggested a radically altered perspective on agency in the study of intellectual history. While in the classical approach, the author had enjoyed all the privileges of agency, Barthes declared the 'death of the author' as the generator and custodian of meaning. Agency was transferred to the reader, who was at the same time seen as heavily constrained by the structure of linguistic convention, which was an expression of the dominant sociopolitical power matrix. Interpretations thus owed nothing to the author's intentions. Meaning was entirely borne out of the intellectual and power political situatedness of the reader. Intellectual history was thus understood as a 'map of misreadings'.[72] But there was a contradiction at the heart of the post-structuralist reconceptualization of intellectual history: on the one hand, the readers acquired a near omniscient status, as they were expected to integrate the infinite possibilities of meaning in their own subjectivity. On the other hand, their very subjectivity was limited by the structure of language, which was equivalent to the structure of power.

In contrast to the emerging post-structuralist tradition, Quentin Skinner's contextualist approach to intellectual history—sometimes also referred to as part of the 'Cambridge school'—privileges the author and his or her agency. Skinner's contextualism not only sidelines the agency of the reader; it is also

[70] Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

[71] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[72] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000).

more pessimistic than the classical approach to intellectual history about the reader's ability to understand texts. For Skinner, intellectual history is precisely not the study and discussion of timeless and universal problems through the lens of the classics. Rather, writing philosophical texts is an exercise in political manoeuvring. Skinner follows J. L. Austin's speech-act theory and distinguishes between the locutionary and the perlocutionary force of speech. While the former concerns the content of what is being said, the latter describes the performative force of the use of language—in other words, what the speaker is *doing* through making a statement. According to Skinner, the perlocutionary force of a statement becomes visible only when we place the author in his or her historical context and analyse the text with a view to how the author manoeuvres in this context by writing or speaking. Skinner's perspective includes the possibility of influence, but only as a strictly constrained option in how an author interacts with his or her context.[73] Much broader and much more important for Skinner is the question of how an author interacted or engaged with his or her context by making particular statements. Skinner calls this self-reflected positioning that the author undertakes through the use of language 'intentions'.[74] In contrast to the post-structuralist approach, understanding for Skinner is not the same as creating meaning, of which there is an infinite number of equally valid variations. The context features as the 'court of appeal for assessing the relative plausibility of incompatible ascriptions of intentionality'.[75]

Despite these contrasting features of the post-structuralist and the contextualist approaches, there is a large common ground between them. Both are anti-foundationalist, meaning that they do not presuppose a fixed and externally founded relationship between signifier and signified.[76] Indeed, what causes the fluidity in the relationship between signifier and signified is political contestation and conflicts over definitional power. From Skinner's perspective, this power background enables us to unearth the author's intentions. For Derrida and Foucault, it is the basis for conflicts over correct interpretations and the power and identity struggles bound up in them. The main difference between the two approaches lies in the question of where the primary focus of the power struggle is located: with the author expressing his or her intentions, as for Skinner, or with the reader manoeuvring the web of interpretations and concomitant power relations. It is, however, likely that power struggles occur

[73] Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i. *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 75. See also Skinner's earlier 'Hermeneutics and the Role of History', *New Literary History*, 7/1 (1975), 209–32.

[74] Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i. 98ff.

[75] Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, i. 87.

[76] Emilia Palonen, 'Quentin Skinner's Rhetoric of Conceptual Change', *History of Human Sciences*, 10/61 (1999), 61–80. On the relationship between Skinner and post-structuralism, see also Tony Burns, 'Interpreting and Appropriating Texts in the History of Political Thought: Quentin Skinner and Poststructuralism', *Contemporary Political Thought*, 10/3 (2011), 313–31.

at both ends and throughout the process of writing and understanding. Therefore, post-structuralist and contextualist perspectives are not only compatible; they may even complement one another. Skinner's contextualism removes the classical texts from the requirements of a 'presentist' perspective that insists on analysing the classics with a view to finding timeless relevance and wisdom in them. At the same time, the post-structuralist perspective reminds us that the present inevitably features as a factor in the interpretation of the history of ideas. Even though we should strive to reflect on our 'presentist' biases, we will never be able to operate in a hermeneutic vacuum.

The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin and his writings provide some indications on how to create a middle ground between post-structuralism and contextualism. Bakhtin considers both the historical context and the concomitant social situatedness of utterances (heteroglossia) and the temporal and unfinished nature of the process of creating meaning and subjective identities (polyphony). He adds a third conceptual aspect: the relation between utterances (intertextuality). As Graham Allen explains: 'The most crucial aspect of language, from this perspective, is that all language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existent patterns of meaning and evaluation, but also promotes and seeks to promote further responses.'[77] All use of language is hence to be understood as a dialogue: 'All utterances are *dialogic*, their meaning and logic dependent upon what has previously been said and on how they will be received by others.'[78] Heteroglossia and intertextuality in Bakhtin's perspective mean that the author has agency: he or she is a socially situated being who can affirm or challenge his or her situation through the use of language. At the same time, Bakhtin does not reconstruct the individual as a stable and monistic entity: the subjectivity of the author as well as that of the reader is always in the process of becoming. So, while for Bakhtin the author is alive and well, he or she does not have an individual psychology. This means that we can observe his or her agency, but this agency should not be construed as 'intentions' as there is no stable subject to assign these intentions to.

The traditional Clausewitz interpretation has suffered from the twin afflictions of lacking attention to Clausewitz's contemporary context and being unabashedly presentist in its motivations. Hence an approach that combines an awareness of both these pitfalls can help propel Clausewitz scholarship to new grounds. At the same time, it opens up the perspective from a narrow focus on 'influence' towards an appreciation of the wider forms of engagement and dialogue in which a classical author such as Clausewitz was involved. Applied to the study presented here, this means that contemporary readers can analyse Clausewitz's *actions* (including speech acts) as a soldier, reformer, and theorist of war, even though his *intentions* often remain opaque.

[77] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 18.
[78] Allen, *Intertextuality*, 19; emphasis in original (in bold).

It acknowledges both the agency of the historical subject, Clausewitz, and the interpreter's own agency as a historically contextualized individual. Put simply, Clausewitz was an avid reader, and there is evidence that he engaged—intellectually and/or politically—in many debates of his time, but he was not an empty receptacle of others' ideas or a mouthpiece of any tradition of thought. He absorbed notions and concepts that emerged in his time, but he also transformed them and integrated them in his oeuvre in a partly idiosyncratic way.

A CLAUSEWITZ FOR ALL WARS?

The primary aim of this book consists in presenting an interpretation of Clausewitz's theory of war that pushes the boundaries of the existing Clausewitz scholarship towards a greater understanding of the central importance of small wars. It presents a systematic study of Clausewitz's writings on small wars and reconstructs the way in which Clausewitz integrated central themes into the evolution of *On War*. It highlights the importance of Clausewitz's strategic, political, and intellectual context as a key to understanding core issues of his work, such as the interaction of reason and passion.

But an approach based on contextualizing Clausewitz implies that his 'wisdom' may not in fact be timeless. This begs the question of why we should study Clausewitz at all, when we have indeed more timely and pressing strategic questions to answer. A historical contextualization of Clausewitz's thought on small wars and people's war inevitably distances his work from the twenty-first-century strategic context. Clausewitz wrote primarily with a view to Prussia's political and strategic situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Prussia's survival was at stake. People's war, and the inclusion of the people in the defence of their country—their nation—was Clausewitz's solution to Prussia's strategic problems. This perspective is about as far removed from the strategic context of Western states at the time of writing in 2017 as it could be. Most European countries—the current exception being the Baltic states and Eastern Europe—are surrounded by friends. Moreover, after almost two centuries of mass conscription (again, there are exceptions), most Western states have turned away from conscription and the ideal of the citizen–soldier as the foundation of their national and collective defence. The increasing professionalization of Western armed forces is the flipside of the abolition of conscription. Western wars, as Pascal Vennesson has remarked, are increasingly waged 'without the people'. This has resulted in a disruption of the always-delicate configuration of democracy and strategy-making. What role do the people play regarding the foreign and defence policy of a Western state? How do they connect to the military? What is the role of governments and their policies? And how does this overall configuration feed back into politics?

Clausewitz's thought can help to formulate and structure an academic and public debate about these questions. His writings prompt us to think about how passion and reason interact with one another in today's Western democracies when it comes to matters of war and strategy. Today's Western publics are by no means dispassionate about their armed forces, as the rise of commemorative practices and the success of charitable organizations such as *Help for Heroes* demonstrate. But, as the experience of the West's 9/11 wars has shown, Western publics can be at the same deeply critical of their governments' decisions to go to war. Does this signify a disconnect between reason and passion? During a 2015 House of Commons debate on the expansion of military operations in the Levant, the Conservative MP Andrew Tyrie criticized the government's decision to extend the UK's air strikes to Syria as being borne out of an 'emotional reflex', which hindered the formulation of a viable strategy.[79] For Tyrie, passionate appeals have no place in strategy-making, but how does passion feature in today's wars waged by the West? Questions such as these demonstrate that Clausewitz's writings are in fact still relevant to the twenty-first-century strategic context, but their value can—paradoxically—be considered only by understanding them in the framework of their historical context.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The remainder of the book is structured as follows. Chapter 2 places Clausewitz in the context of his work on eighteenth-century partisan warfare. This context has often been overlooked or mistakenly subsumed under the category of guerrilla warfare. Yet it is firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century tradition of *petite guerre* as a tactical complement to major war. This understanding is profoundly different from the political features that small war as people's war acquired during and after the French Revolution. Clausewitz was an ardent analyst of both partisan warfare and people's war. In 1810 and 1811, he lectured at the Berlin *Kriegsschule*, the war academy, on the subject of small wars. In his lectures, he referenced eighteenth-century classics on *petite guerre* such as Gerhard von Scharnhorst 'pocket manual' and the writings of Johann von Ewald and Andreas Emmerich. These practitioner–scholars tended to treat small wars as a tactical subset of large wars. Unsurprisingly, Clausewitz himself in his lectures focused on the tactical nature of small wars. Yet, the eighteenth-century context was by no means irrelevant for Clausewitz's further intellectual development. On the contrary, he extrapolated from his analysis of

[79] Andrew Tyrie, House of Commons, 2 December 2015, Hansard, col. 422.

the tactical nature of small wars, their strategic potential, as well as their exemplary nature for the study of war as such. Smalls wars, he wrote in his lecture script, are 'particularly interesting' because they require a combination of 'audacity and caution' and hence illustrate the 'free play of the spirit [*Geist*]'—a notion to which Clausewitz returned in his famous trinity book I, Chapter 1, of *On War*.[80]

Chapter 3 covers Clausewitz's writings from the reform years and his thoughts on the existential qualities of war. Clausewitz's engagement in the Prussian reform movement is well known. He worked alongside his mentor Gerhard von Scharnhorst and his friend and fellow officer August Neidhardt von Gneisenau on plans for a popular insurrection as a first step towards ending the Napoleonic occupation of Prussia. In 1812, he voiced his opinions on the political weakness of the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III in no uncertain terms in his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*. Shortly after that, he left the Prussian army and joined the Russian armed forces in order to fight against Napoleon's troops and his allies, among them the Prussian military.

Clausewitz's writings from this period combine themes that were central to his thought from his earliest texts and his correspondence, such as the value of the individual as the primary political agent. At the same time, they reflect a thorough engagement with the intellectual context of his time. In 1809, Clausewitz wrote a letter to the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte in which he characterized a people's war against foreign occupation as the 'most beautiful of wars'. In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* he presented a notion of war that emphasized its existential and emancipatory qualities. Clausewitz formulated his notion of war in its existential form against the backdrop of contemporary intellectual, political, and cultural discourses in Prussia and Germany more broadly. One of the core problems of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy was the question of how to overcome the various Kantian dualisms—between phenomenon and noumenon, between sense and sensuality, and between the individual and society. After the experience of the French Revolution's descent into terror, this problem acquired an immediate political significance, a significance that Clausewitz's contemporaries (in particular, Novalis, Schiller, and Fichte) were keenly aware of: how to advance the liberation of the individual and society more broadly from traditional forms of political authority without risking a degeneration of all political institutions. Clausewitz's answer to this dilemma was the involvement of the people in the liberation of their country, which would at the same time signify an act of self-liberation and self-education that would lead to a balance between reason and passion.

[80] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 239.

After 1815, Clausewitz grew increasingly frustrated about the decline in Prussia's reform project. None the less, he continued to defend the Prussian *Landwehr* (militia) against its increasingly numerous detractors. For Clausewitz, the *Landwehr*, and more broadly the involvement of the people in the defence of their country, fulfilled a political role in that it served as a quasi-constitutional expression of popular sovereignty that united the people and harmonized reason and passion rather than dividing them into parliamentary factions led by populist agitators.

As Chapter 4 shows, Clausewitz's concerns about the potential deterioration of public life and political institutions grew only in the aftermath of the wars of liberation and the events of 1817–19 in Prussia, such as the Wartburg-Fest and the murder of the conservative playwright Kotzebue. At the same time, Clausewitz's career was deeply affected by his more or less open criticism of the Prussian king in 1812 and his subsequent decision to join the Russian forces in order to fight against France and its ally Prussia. In the years 1820–31, he wrote three texts on broader political questions: 'Agitation' (*Umtriebe*) in the early 1820s and two texts on the Polish insurrection in 1831. Peter Paret has interpreted those texts as signifying a transformation in Clausewitz's political position from a naive and sentimental nationalism towards a more realistic, Machiavellian approach to politics. However, while the tone of Clausewitz's political writings changed after 1815—partly as a result of conscious self-censorship and the desire to keep a low political profile—his basic political position did not. Clausewitz was still concerned with the question of how to balance reason and passion in the framework of Prussia's political life. But the three texts reflect that he had grown wary of the political process both in Prussia and in Europe more broadly. His main concern was that political demagogues could whip up the passion of the masses and harness them to their own political projects. In such a scenario, reason and passion would be out of balance. In this context, Clausewitz returned to the notion of the 'partisan', which acquired a political rather than a tactical meaning: the 'partisan' was the factionalist populist agitator who threatened to undermine the political community rather than unite it.

Chapter 5 traces the lines from Clausewitz's intellectual engagement with small war to his magnum opus, *On War*. It shows how Clausewitz's lifelong concern with the integration of reason and emotions/passion runs like a red thread through to his mature theory of war. In the trinity of passion, reason, and the free play of the spirit, the latter element did not constitute a new element that Clausewitz added to the dichotomy of emotions/passion and reason. Rather, the free play of the spirit, associated with the role of the military commander, mediated between those two poles. The ideal notion of the general as 'military genius' embodies the harmonization of the two types of human faculties and requires the military commander to reach above and beyond strategic questions into the political realm.

In contrast to this continuity regarding the integration of reason and emotions/passion, Clausewitz's thought on the role of people's war evolved while he was writing *On War*. Whereas, in the reform years, people's war had constituted an exceptional measure as a response to the exceptional situation of Napoleonic imperialism, in *On War* people's war became firmly integrated into Clausewitz's theory of major war. After Clausewitz's intellectual crisis of 1826–7, the defending side's retreat into the interior of its own country emerged not only as the option that Clausewitz advocated from a strategic point of view. More importantly, it was the crucial move that could explain why defence was the stronger form of war. Initially, Clausewitz had gleaned this insight from his historical study of Napoleon's ill-fated 1812 campaign in Russia. In that case, people's war had not played a crucial role. However, Clausewitz argued that Russia was a special case owing to its vast territory and its concomitant strategic depth, which no other European country could hope to match. Where this strategic depth was lacking, people's war could make up for it by increasing the vulnerability of the attacker's lines of communication.

This demonstrates that Clausewitz's thinking on small war, and people's war in particular, was characterized by both change and continuity: Clausewitz continued to believe that a state such as Prussia, located in the middle of Europe between France and Russia, had to nationalize and democratize its military defence and to harness its people into the war effort. Increasingly, though, Clausewitz believed that, in a defensive capacity, people's war could become the custodian of the European balance of power. In this respect, Clausewitz proved to be an early (implicit) theorist of deterrence.

Chapter 6, Conclusions, summarizes the arguments of the book and evaluates them with respect to contemporary strategic problems. Even though the book highlights the role of small war for Clausewitz's theory of war, we cannot draw any straightforward lessons for small wars in the twenty-first century. Clausewitz's thinking on small war was geared towards defensive people's war on European territory—a situation that is not likely to arise in the near future. But taking Clausewitz as a starting point can help us ask questions about other timely strategic problems—namely, the dilemmas of deterrence, the role of the armed forces in late-modern democracies, and the responsibilities of the military commander in the process of strategy-making.

2

Clausewitz and the Eighteenth-Century Context of Partisan Warfare

The Fusion of Tactics and *Politik*

In one of his earliest texts published under the title *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804*, Clausewitz made an effort to describe the characteristics of a good military commander. Significantly, this early description was almost entirely negative: Clausewitz started with the question of whether military commanders had to have knowledge of mathematics, as stipulated by Johann Georg J. Venturini, an Austrian veteran of the revolutionary wars, and the French general Mathieu Dumas. Clausewitz disagreed with Venturini and Dumas, arguing that 'mathematics has as much to do with the art of war proper as a sermon'.[1] Clausewitz went on to examine what subjects a military commander ought to study, considering geography, public policy, artillery, and minor tactics, all of which he conceded to be useful to a certain extent. But all those subjects, Clausewitz argued, were too detailed and not sufficiently abstract for the military practitioner. Higher tactics and strategy were more relevant, yet they consisted of 'little knowledge and much exercise of judgement'.[2] After all these subjects had been discarded as of limited use to the military commander, Clausewitz closed his observations with a single paragraph on positive features a commander ought to have: rather than erudition, he should possess 'natural faculties', 'character', and 'a strong aspiring soul'.[3]

In his lectures on small war, which Clausewitz delivered at the Berlin *Kriegsschule* in 1810 and 1811, he presented a much clearer description of the characteristics required in a good military commander. He echoed the requirement of possessing a good 'natural instinct' that he had already mentioned in the *Strategie* text. Significantly, this natural instinct is something that Clausewitz ascribed primarily to those fighting in small formations of light

[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804, mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809*, ed. Eberhard Kessel (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1943), 39.
[2] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 41. [3] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 41.

infantry or cavalry such as Hussars and *Jäger* (chasseur) units. By contrast, regular units suppressed the 'natural instinct' of officers and soldiers through drill and rigid formations.[4]

Apart from his recourse to the established feature of 'natural instinct', Clausewitz derived a number of desirable characteristics from the example of those who are serving with light troops: they act as individuals rather than as small cogs of a large machine-like mass. Furthermore, they are able to integrate opposite mental states: they are forced to balance courage, audacity, and self-confidence against risk adversity and prudence—a balancing act made possible by relying on 'experience and habit'.[5] These are themes that Clausewitz went on to develop further in *On War*, in particular in book I, Chapter 3, on 'Military Genius'.[6] By comparing the *Strategie* text with Clausewitz's lectures on small war, we can see how his theorizing evolved and became richer over time. While Clausewitz established some core themes that were to recur in *On War* as early as 1804, such as the differentiation of strategy and tactics and a definition of war that focused on combat,[7] the *Strategie* text remained largely in the field of criticism of established authors and concepts.

Clausewitz's lecture scripts from 1810–12 illustrate that his thought had evolved dramatically by that time. He was able to offer a far more constructive and independent analysis of war than in his earlier writings. The significance of the lectures has been often overlooked in Clausewitz scholarship. This is to a certain extent understandable, inasmuch as large parts of the script deal with tactical details, many of which Clausewitz derived from other authors, most importantly his teacher and mentor Gerhard von Scharnhorst. Yet, the script contains sections and ideas that reflect genuine evolutions in Clausewitz's thought. First, Clausewitz treated small war as an exemplary field of war more generally. Crucial concepts familiar from *On War*, such as the 'free play of the spirit', emerged first in the context of his lecture script. Secondly, Clausewitz developed in his observations on small war the model of a soldier that stood in stark contrast to the *ancien régime* tradition of soldiering. Clausewitz, and other reformers, projected the negative traits of the latter onto the regular units of their time: regular soldiers lacked agency; they functioned like cogs in a big machine, their individual actions did not matter. In contrast to this, the partisan possessed agency and individuality. He had to decide on his course of action without receiving orders from superiors. This model of a new, self-motivated, and self-disciplined soldier is the essential foundation of Clausewitz's ideas about people's war and the institution of a

[4] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 238.
[5] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 237ff.
[6] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 231ff; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 100ff.).
[7] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 62. On Clausewitz's combat-centric definition of war, see also Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 133ff.

Prussian *Landsturm*, as we shall see in the next chapter. Finally, a close reading of Clausewitz's lectures on small war also reveals the emergence of an acute awareness of the historicity of war in his intellectual development around 1810 and 1811. His engagement with small war was part of a broader backlash against Enlightenment strategic thought and its mechanistic operational prescriptions. However, the fact that the topic of change in the practice of war is a recurrent one throughout the lectures indicates that Clausewitz started developing an idea of the historicity of war that stood in stark contrast to the Enlightenment discourse of teleological progress towards a peaceful end state.

This chapter proceeds in three steps: the first step (covered in the next two sections) contextualizes Clausewitz's lectures on small war against the backdrop of the surge in the interest in small-war tactics in mid-eighteenth-century Europe. The second step (and second and third sections) provides both an overview and a close reading of Clausewitz's lectures on small war. The final part discusses the relevance of the lectures for our overall understanding of Clausewitz's intellectual development. It shows that the lectures were partly a framework in which Clausewitz devised theoretical elements that he later used in *On War*. More significantly, they reflect stages in his intellectual journey that provided crucial stepping stones for his further writing: the conceptualization of the partisan as the new model of the citizen soldier laid the foundation for Clausewitz's conceptualization of people's war as reflected in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* of 1812. Moreover, his polemic against the naive progressivism of Enlightenment strategic thought confronted him for the first time in his intellectual development with the problem of historical change in the practice of war—a problem he would return to fifteen years later when he decided to revise *On War* fundamentally. The chapter concludes that Clausewitz's lectures on small war have not been granted the attention that they deserve, given their relevance for his intellectual development.

PARTISAN WARFARE: THE *PETITE GUERRE* TRADITION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The interest in small war that surged in eighteenth-century Europe was partly sparked by operational requirements. By the eighteenth century monarchs in Europe had successfully increased their control over their armies. Yet, paradoxically it had become increasingly difficult for them to use those armies to wage war. The average size of European armies had more than doubled between the mid-seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. Mobilizing for major war slowed down economic production and inevitably put a strain on state finances. Communication capabilities had not grown in measure

equal with the size of armies, and thus the radius of their campaigns was limited. Tactical limitations meant that battles were often costly, but rarely decisive.[8] In these circumstances, reliance on small mobile units of light infantry and light cavalry provided European states with increased room for manoeuvre. These units could either serve alongside regular units and take on tasks that regular forces struggled with, such as reconnaissance, or operate independently.[9] The overall notion for these light infantry and cavalry detachments was *parties* in French or *Partheyen* in German. Their members were called 'partisans'.[10]

The practice of *petite guerre* has remained understudied to date in the early modern European historiography. One of the few systematic studies on the relevance of partisan warfare is George Satterfield's *Princes, Posts and Partisans*.[11] Satterfield shows that during Louis XIV's Dutch War (1673–8), the *petite guerre* element not only played a tactical role in supporting major operations; rather, it was in itself strategically relevant. Raids and the collection of war taxes, which were the partisans' chief contributions to the war, were as important as sieges and major battles. Sandrine Picaud-Monnerat echoes this assessment of the relevance of partisan units and their operations: even though in France they were frequently denounced as merciless and undisciplined fighters, their operational purpose was clearly recognized in the eighteenth century.[12]

Beyond operational requirements, there were other factors at play that contributed to the rise of *petite guerre* in the eighteenth century. First among them were administrative and sociopolitical enabling factors: far from representing the era of a straightforward monopolization of military force by the state, early modern European military organizations were mostly structured as public–private partnerships, in which aristocratic officers could purchase commissions and had to raise and finance their own troops. In return, they received prize money for successfully fought military actions. In the framework of this system of military organization, partisan units, often referred to as 'free corps', had a greater degree of independence, as their actions were further removed from direct central control than those of regular units. At the same time, their rewards were more immediate, in that they were allowed to retain the spoils of war. 'Little war was closely associated

[8] Sandrine Picaud-Monnerat, *La Petite Guerre au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Economica, 2010); cf. Strachan, *European Armies*, 11–12.

[9] Walter Laqueur, 'The Origins of Guerrilla Doctrine', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10/3 (1975), 341–82.

[10] Heuser, 'Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz', 144.

[11] George Satterfield, *Princes, Posts and Partisans: The Army of Louis XIV and Partisan Warfare in the Netherlands (1673–1678)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

[12] Picaud-Monnerat, *La Petite Guerre*.

with the collection of forage and booty. In this respect, it was a relic of pre-modern times.'[13]

Historical factors also played a role inasmuch as European powers tended to recruit traditional border militias as light troops. During the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–8), light units recruited from the south Slavonic and Hungarian borders of the Habsburg Empire, called Croats and Pandours, constituted 40 per cent of Maria Theresa's overall force numbers. This, in turn, prompted Maria Theresa's French opponents in 1744 to create new units of light forces called 'Grassins' after their leader, Simon Claude Grassin de Glatigny. Light cavalry regiments of Hussars also originated from the European border with the Ottoman Empire and spread across Europe. During the eighteenth century, the Russian Empire increasingly recruited Cossack cavalry units into its military services. Traditionally, the Cossacks had resided along the border with the Tatar steppe and had fended off Tatar incursions in this border region. In Britain, Highlanders were recruited into the army during the Seven Years War. Even though Highland regiments were not recruited as light infantry units, they enjoyed a reputation as particularly martial troops that stemmed from their—arguably romanticized—performance against the English Crown's forces during the Jacobite rebellions.[14]

Finally, politico-economic factors were at play too. These applied specifically in some of the smaller German principalities. Most notorious among these was the landgraviate of Hesse-Kassel. Britain was the primary 'customer' of this principality. It had started hiring Hessian regiments in 1688 and continued to do so until the end of the eighteenth century. The Hessian trade in provision of armed forces resulted from the typical desire of lesser German principalities to secure their status in the Reich by maintaining a large army. The practice of hiring out troops to other monarchs had started under the reign of Charles I (1670–1730). Increasingly, Hesse-Kassel's public finances relied on the soldier trade. Hessian auxiliary regiments saw their most notorious deployment in the American War of Independence (1775–83), during which the Hessian landgrave Frederick II leased 22,000 troops to the British king George III, receiving £3,191,000 in exchange. The majority of the Hessians were not partisans; but their number included a substantial proportion of light *Jäger* units.

Partisan units operating in the eighteenth century seemed to have backward, if not even archaic, characteristics: their names often betrayed their ethnic origins at a time when states rather than ethnic groups tried to provide the prime marker of political identity. They also retained features of

[13] Martin Rink, 'The Partisan's Metamorphosis: From Freelance Military Entrepreneur to German Freedom Fighter, 1740–1815', *War in History*, 17/1 (2010), 11.

[14] Cf. Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 57ff.

mercenarism inasmuch as they were subject to a lesser degree of central control, while being at the same time more overtly motivated by material gain (and hence often infamous for pillaging). But partisan units were also often nuclei of tactical innovation. A good example for such innovation and tactical adaptability were the Hessian *Jäger* corps. While the Hessian regular regiments deployed in the War of American Independence often proved too inflexible to break up their Frederician tactical system when the situation required it, such as during the Battle of Trenton (26 December 1776), the *Jäger* were used to fighting in open order. This proved more effective, in particular towards the end of the war, and reserved the *Jäger* the admiration of their American opponents.[15] It was these innovative traits that attracted the attention of eighteenth-century military writers and turned partisan warfare into a fashionable military topic.

THE 'DOCTRINE' OF *PETITE GUERRE*

The second half of the eighteenth century saw a surge in publications on small war—so much so that Clausewitz remarked in his lectures on small war that 'there are many more authors writing about small war than about big war'.[16] Classics of this era were Thomas Antoine le Roy de Grandmaison, Turpin de Crissé, Capitaine de Jeney, Comte de la Roche, Roger Stevenson, Johann von Ewald, Andreas Emmerich, Georg Wilhelm Baron von Valentini, Friedrich Leopold Klipstein, and Carl von Decker. There were common themes that ran through these publications. The bulk of the texts covered tactical details such as marches and patrols, reconnaissance missions, raids, fortifications and breastworks, and so on. Apart from providing tactical instructions, these publications also set out exacting requirements for the men chosen to serve in small detachments. Grandmaison, for instance, opined that 'they ought to be young and robust; not too tall ("better five feet than five and a half") and not too young, because they had to be able to endure fatigue and various privations'.[17]

While the amount of tactical detail offered is a more or less universal feature of these texts, some authors widened the requirements applied to recruits to include moral features in addition to physical prerequisites. This was particularly striking in Ewald's *Abhandlung über den Dienst der leichten Truppen*

[15] Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 133.

[16] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 445.

[17] Laqueur, 'The Origins of Guerrilla Doctrine', 343; cf. Heuser, 'Small Wars in the Age of Clausewitz'.

(*Treatise on the Service of Light Troops*). 'The light corps', wrote Ewald, 'require the cleanliest, most orderly, loyal, lively, able and courageous officers'.[18] Ewald had served with the Hessian *Jäger* in the American War of Independence. His writings were based on his experience in that theatre of war. More importantly, they also reflected that the institution of the Hessian *Jäger* represented a specific case of light troops. The recruitment and social composition of light troops in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe covered a spectrum of different types of light troops. On one end of the spectrum, there were units such as Colonel Franz von der Trenck's *Pandours* Corps, infamous for their atrocious and undisciplined behaviour in the Habsburg campaigns of 1741 in Silesia and Bavaria. Trenck himself had already been notorious before he raised his *Pandours* Corps and had been court-martialled for indiscipline and insubordination while serving in the Russian cavalry. His corps consisted of Slavonic mercenaries whose disposition seemingly matched their leader's predilection for brutality.[19]

The Hessian *Jäger*, by contrast, had a reputation for firm discipline and superior military performance. It was Landgrave William V of Hesse-Kassel who had raised the first *Jäger* unit in 1631. The literal translation of the term *Jäger* is 'hunter', which had its origin in the practice of recruiting *Jäger* troops from the foresting and hunting personnel of the Hessian state. In contrast to the mercenaries who served in other light units, the *Jäger* were originally civilians who were valued for their superior marksmanship and knowledge of nature. Until the outbreak of the Silesian War in 1740, *Jäger* units had been dissolved after each campaign and had returned to their civilian roles. Their popularity increased over the subsequent decades, so much so that in 1773, Frederick the Great decided to raise a Prussian *Feldjägerbatallion*. His plan was to recruit Hessian *Jäger* veterans into this battalion. This, in turn, prompted the Hessian landgrave Frederick II to expand his *Leibjägercompanie* in order to prevent the loss of his most valued elite recruits. It was Ewald who in 1744 became the commanding officer of this unit.[20]

Against this background, it is unsurprising that Ewald placed a premium on the moral qualities of light troops. This applied, in particular, to officers, who had 'to achieve on a small scale what a general does on a large scale'.[21] What Ewald alludes to in this context is the concept of *coup d'oeil*. *Coup d'oeil*, the

[18] Johann von Ewald, *Abhandlung über den Dienst der leichte Truppen* (Flensburg, Schleswig, and Leipzig: Kortensche Buchhandlung, 1790), 6. Ewald had published an earlier version of this treatise under the title *Abhandlung über den kleinen Krieg* (*Treatise on Small War*) (Kassel: Johann Jacob Cramer, 1785).

[19] Cf. Rink, 'The Partisan's Metamorphosis', 10ff.

[20] Robert A. Selig, 'Light Infantry Lessons from America? Johann Ewald's Experiences in the American Revolutionary War as Depicted in his *Abhandlung über den kleinen Krieg* (1785)', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 23/1 (1994), 114ff.

[21] Ewald, *Abhandlung über den Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 7.

literal translation of which is 'blink of an eye', was an eighteenth-century military concept:

> The very best commanders possessed *coup d'oeil*, defined by Frederick the Great as the ability to judge the number of soldiers that could operate effectively within a given area and to grasp fully the military advantages of terrain. One might further define *coup d'oeil* as the penetrating and educated sweep of the eye (often extended by the spyglass) that enabled commanders to deploy units effectively and to recognize the shifting sounds and patterns of battle. Recognition implied action: the temerity and boldness to take full advantage of fleeting opportunities, even when information was incomplete or seemingly contradictory. Timing was everything, especially when making quick decisions under stress to deploy from column to line, to commit reserves to shore up a faltering position, or to order a cavalry charge as an attempt at a killing stroke.[22]

Gerhard von Scharnhorst, who referenced Ewald's treatise on multiple occasions in his *Military Pocketbook*, echoed the importance that officers 'have to know, and in the case of small detachments NCOs too, what is supposed to happen on the whole'.[23] Scharnhorst's *Pocketbook* is a particularly interesting publication in this context, as it was presented as a general guide for officers in the field, rather than a dedicated small-war manual. And yet the manner of presentation and the tactical concepts it covers are very close to the small-war publications of Scharnhorst's time. In other words, Scharnhorst saw small-war tactics as exemplary for large-war tactics. This chimed with Ewald's notion that service in light units was educational. Ewald recommended that all line soldiers and officers were to serve with light units for a limited amount of time, which would provide them with training and experience: 'The line soldiers would be increasingly hardened through the exertion; encountering the enemy close up would not be anything new for the individual solder, which for line troops happens only during battle or during an engagement, or at least very rarely.'[24] 'Little war was continuous war'—an opportunity to gather experience at a time when many commanders tried to avoid battle.[25]

Here we encounter a paradox: while small-war manuals depicted service with light units as exemplary and educational, they emphasized at the same time the fundamental differences between light units and regular troops. The Hessian *Jäger* corps in particular was recruited from among volunteers and specialists. They received a higher bounty and higher pay once they had signed up. In other words, even though they had to 'carry their skin to the market',

[22] Dennis E. Showalter and William J. Astore, *The Early Modern World: Soldiers' Lives through History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 90.

[23] Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Militärisches Handbuch zum Gebrauch im Felde* (Hanover, 1794), 196.

[24] Ewald, *Abhandlung von dem Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 2.

[25] Selig, 'Light Infantry Lessons from America?', 113.

just as those recruited into the regular Hessian regiments, theirs was a highly competitive, 'elite' market.[26] Once they had signed up to the *Jäger* corps, their training as well as their treatment differed from that of the line soldier. Andreas Emmerich, another veteran of the American War of Independence, stressed that 'such a corps is intended solely for active services, and not for parade'.[27] Emmerich also emphasized that light units boasted a more egalitarian spirit than regular regiments did. He demanded that 'the officers ought to have as few servants as possible, and those, as well as every other person belonging to the corps, ought to be cloathed in the same uniform'.[28] In the same vein, Ewald wrote that recruitment and promotion of officers in the light units had to be meritocratic rather than based on financial means or social standing.[29] In stark contrast to the draconian punishments meted out in regular units, *Jäger* officers had to lead by example. Yet, this did not mean that discipline in the *Jäger* corps was lax. On the contrary, both Ewald and Emmerich emphasized time and again that desertion and pillaging were not to be tolerated. Even though Ewald recommended severe punishment for those *Jäger* who committed atrocities towards the population of the territory in which they operated, he immediately went on to stress that, 'despite rigid discipline, one has to show the soldier love; one has to take care that he receives whatever he is owed on time'—the latter presumably in a bid to suppress the temptation of pillaging at its root, which was often late pay and insufficient provisions.[30]

The upshot of this paradox is that writers such as Emmerich, and, in particular, Ewald saw light units as the role model of a new soldier. Indeed, Ewald recommended at the outset of his treatise that *all* officers and soldiers be trained for service with light units: 'It would be best for an army, in order to render light units slightly less necessary, to train line troops for service in light units.'[31] Ewald's recommendation was to fall on deaf ears within pre-revolutionary Europe. Frederick the Great and many of his contemporaries regarded the American War of Independence as an aberration, whose lessons were not applicable to European warfare. 'The people who come back from America imagine they know all there is to know about war, and yet they have to start learning war all over again in Europe,' he remarked shortly before his death in 1786.[32]

[26] Cf. Atwood, *The Hessians*, 133.

[27] Andreas Emmerich, *The Partisan in War, of the Use of a Corps of Light Troops to an Army* (London: H. Reynell, 1789), 38.

[28] Emmerich, *The Partisan*, 14.

[29] Ewald, *Abhandlung von dem Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 7.

[30] Ewald, *Abhandlung von dem Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 16.

[31] Ewald, *Abhandlung von dem Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 1.

[32] Quoted in Selig, 'Light Infantry Lessons from America', 120. See also Peter Paret, 'The Relationship between the American Revolutionary War and European Military Thought and

The small-war discourse experienced a revival as a result of the experiences of the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars. It was a ready projection screen for those, such as the members of the Prussian military reform movement, who were convinced that French expansionism could not be reined in by clinging to the Frederician military system. The small-war discourse re-emerged after 1795 as a 'counter-hegemonic' discourse to what reformers such as Scharnhorst and Clausewitz saw as the dominant but woefully inadequate Enlightenment military theory. One has to be careful not to exaggerate the 'clash of paradigms' at work in this context. Even Heinrich von Bülow, the most frequent target of Clausewitz's vitriolic criticism, acknowledged that individual courage and initiative were the ideal of the modern soldier.[33] In the same vein, Bülow's contemporary Georg Heinrich von Berenhorst raged against the cog mentality that the Frederician military system instilled in its soldiers.[34] Yet, neither Bülow nor Berenhorst would have gone so far as to conceive of small war as an ideal school for war writ large. But that was precisely what the Prussian military reformers, and Clausewitz in particular, did.

It is thus unsurprising that Ewald's and Emmerich's writings were the primary references in Clausewitz's lectures on small war, along with frequent mentions of Scharnhorst's *Military Pocketbook*, who himself referred to Ewald and Emmerich on more than one occasion. Ewald's and Emmerich's writings chimed with the ideas of the Prussian reform movement: they promoted egalitarian and meritocratic structures, advocated a style of discipline that was based on self-control and leadership by example, and, above all, heralded individual action and initiative. The requirements for the commanding officers of light units in some respects prefigured what Clausewitz later wrote on the qualities of 'military genius'—the need to observe and act quickly, and the value of combining insight into detail with a sound assessment of the operational goal in its entirety. But, as we shall see in the next section, the clash of the Frederician military paradigm with the counter-hegemonic small-war discourse also pushed Clausewitz to consider in more depth the change in the practice of fighting wars that had taken place in his lifetime. When Clausewitz chided the Enlightenment military thinkers for wrongly assuming that small-unit operations would not play a relevant role in war any longer, stating that their relevance was, *au contraire*, on the rise, he also presented an observation about how war was subject to change during his lifetime. The

Practice', in Paret (ed.), *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 26–38, on the differences in political circumstances between the American War of Independence and Europe in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

[33] Laqueur, 'The Origins of Guerrilla Doctrine', 348.

[34] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 156.

critique of Enlightenment strategic thought that Clausewitz developed in his lectures on small wars was twofold: on the one hand, it addressed the inadequacies of the *ancien régime* military system; on the other hand, it also challenged the Enlightenment idea of history as a continuous progress towards more rational and linear forms of war.

CLAUSEWITZ'S *LECTURES ON SMALL WAR*

Clausewitz took up his role as an instructor as at the Berlin *Kriegsschule* in August 1810. He began lecturing with the start of the new term in October of the same year. He took over Scharnhorst's lectures on small war, which the latter had been delivering since 1806. Clausewitz's *Lectures on Small War* were designed to complement Carl Ludwig Heinrich von Tiedemann's lectures on 'war in its broad outlines', as Clausewitz put it.[35] He continued delivering his lectures in 1811; but he had to quit the course prematurely owing to his decision to leave the Prussian service in April 1812.

Scharnhorst had chosen Clausewitz as the instructor for the small-war lectures, as he considered him as his expert in questions of people's war. The intertwining of partisan warfare and people's war hence characterized Clausewitz's engagement with small war from the very beginning; and was indeed suggested by Scharnhorst. It is thus not surprising that Clausewitz's innovation in his lectures on small war was the inclusion of instances of popular insurrections against the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic forces, such as in the Vendée, in the Tyrol and in Spain.

Werner Hahlweg, editor of the German editions of a number of Clausewitz's writings, emphasized that Clausewitz was much more systematic in his treatment of small war than any of his predecessors. The philosophical–dialectical method with which Clausewitz approached the topic and the recurrent use of examples are structures that are common to both the lectures and his magnum opus, *On War*.[36] The lectures are voluminous: they comprise 395 pages in the Hahlweg edition, including a variety of additional materials. They are split into four parts: first, the lectures on small war and the art of field fortification; secondly, a collection of examples; thirdly, the *collectaneen* on the lectures; and, fourthly, an exposition on the ballistics of the artillery.

[35] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 228. Tiedemann, like Clausewitz, had excelled as Scharnhorst's student at the *Kriegsschule*. His lectures covered infantry tactics in battle and were published in 1820 for internal use in the Prussian army.

[36] Werner Hahlweg, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg: Vorbemerkung', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 213.

Clausewitz started his lectures with a theme that he would later cover extensively in *On War*: he insisted that the art of war was unlike mathematics, philosophy, or logic in that the latter allowed for analytical judgements a priori, whereas, in the realm of war, there existed a certain gap between *Anschauungen*, meaning sensations or perceptions, and *das allgemeine*, the abstract or the general.[37] After this epistemological 'warning', he proceeded to give a tactical description of the characteristics of small-war units. They featured mobility, autarky and relative independence in the field, and secrecy. If small units operated in support of regular units, their role was that of skirmishers in major combat operations. What set small war apart from large war, Clausewitz went on to explain, was that operations conducted by small units were neither offensive nor defensive: inasmuch as small units were tasked with reconnaissance, they waged what Clausewitz referred to as 'Beobachtungskrieg', observation war. If combat was the essence of 'dem übrigen Krieg', all other forms of war, it was rarely the primary task of small units.[38]

Curiously, Clausewitz did not expand on this thought any further. Instead, he jumped to the question of small war and its place in the context of tactics and strategy. He posited that small war belonged to the realm of tactics, and, since tactics was a subordinate part of strategy, and strategy was the *modus operandi* of big wars, small wars were a subordinate part of big wars. He concluded: 'Thus one can say that the strategy of small war is subject to tactics; and because the tactics of small war are surely part of tactics more generally, small war in its entirety is subsumed within tactics, meaning that it will be a specific chapter thereof.'[39] This categorization of small war is unsurprising; first, because it echoes the eighteenth-century tradition of regarding small war as a tactical complement to big war; and, secondly, because it also harkens back to Clausewitz's definition of tactics and strategy that he had already given in his early text *Strategie* and that he would reiterate in *On War*.[40] Yet, when viewed against Clausewitz's earlier epistemological warning, this categorization is utterly puzzling, as it is a prime example of an analytical judgement a priori along the lines of Leibnizian *Begriffslogik*, term logic, which was the predominant logical tradition at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A formalization of his argument would look like this:

The strategy of small war is subject to tactics
The tactics of small war are part of tactics more generally
ERGO Small war is part of tactics

[37] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 234.
[38] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 235.
[39] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 237.
[40] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 345ff; bk. III, ch. 1 (*On War*, 177ff).

This is precisely the kind of logical inference that Clausewitz had warned against. However, in line with the dialectical structure of reasoning that, according to Hahlweg, characterizes the lectures, it is a first step that Clausewitz was quick to overcome and leave behind.

The next section of the lectures, entitled 'On the Character of Small War', approaches the definitional question from a different angle. It starts with a theme that is familiar from the established small-wars publications—namely, the features and requirements for the troops who are to serve in small war. In this context, Clausewitz echoed both Ewald and Emmerich when he drew a sharp distinction between those who served with the line and small-war units: 'The individual Hussar or *Jäger* has an enterprising spirit, a confidence in himself and his luck that is foreign to the one who always served with the line.'[41] Regular troops are alienated from their natural instincts by drill and rigid tactical structures. Clausewitz agreed that this suppression of natural instincts was necessary inasmuch as troops fighting in regular formations would otherwise simply flee in the face of combat when their role was to press on with an attack. Those serving in small-war units, by contrast, had to rely fully on their instincts. They also possessed a far greater degree of latitude in their actions: 'prudent dispositions' and 'dispersion across space', according to Clausewitz, opened up the possibility of 'thousands of combinations'.[42] Implicit in Clausewitz's specification of small-war tactics and their requirements is the notion that, precisely because the members of light units have far greater latitude in their actions, they also require a higher degree of awareness of the operational situation in its entirety. This is reminiscent of Scharnhorst's stipulation that officers of light units do the work that generals do in the context of the war effort on the whole.

Given Clausewitz's earlier argument that small war was neither defensive nor offensive, it is interesting that, in this section, he implied that light units are much more likely to see combat on a regular basis than regular units.[43] This is also an idea that echoes the writings of Ewald and Emmerich: 'Almost all authors have considered this game [*Spiel*] of small war as an excellent exercise for the troops, whereupon the opportunity presents itself to ruin the opposing troops through frequent alarms and to spread a spirit of horror through individual successful coups.'[44] However, Clausewitz went on to explain, they would often withdraw rather than confront a superior opponent.

[41] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 237–8.
[42] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 239.
[43] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 238.
[44] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 394. Note that the idea of small war as a 'game' was already present in sixteenth-century chivalric discourses on partisan raids. Yet, the tradition is broken owing to the fact that this notion was restricted to the aristocracy and served as proof of their 'prowess and honour'. Benjamin Deruelle, 'The Sixteenth-Century Antecedents of Special Operations "Small War"', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 25/4 (2014), 763.

But they could also instigate small operations such as raids and ambushes if the opportunity presented itself. It was, according to Clausewitz, precisely their unspoiled instincts that allowed them to decide what course of action to take in a given situation. This was what rendered small war exemplary in Clausewitz's eyes: 'This free play of the spirit that takes place in small war, this skilful combination of boldness and prudence (one might say this fortunate mixture of audacity and fear), is what makes small war so exceptionally interesting.'[45]

It is evident that in this context Clausewitz moved far beyond the definition of small war as a tactical subchapter of war in general. Far from being subordinate to big war, small war is exemplary for the latter. This is an argument that can already be found in Emmerich's and Ewald's writings, but Clausewitz stretched it significantly in that he applied it to the ideal soldier fighting in small wars. In other words, the significance of small war did not lie in the realm of tactics, because the tactical situation that light units were most likely to encounter was different from the context of big wars. Rather, small war fostered a particular mental disposition in those who were fighting in it: they had to balance various emotions, had to combine them with their perceptions, and had to be able to execute their operations on the basis of this mindset. It is significant in this context that Clausewitz used, for the first time in his writings, the notion of 'dieses freie Spiel des Geistes' ('this free play of the spirit'), which would recur later in Chapter 1 of book I of *On War*, where Clausewitz introduced his famous trinity and assigned the military the realm the 'play of probability and chance that turns war into a free activity of the soul'.[46]

In contrast, regular troops rarely had an opportunity to develop their mental dispositions or to act decisively as individuals: 'Seldom will a battalion involved in a battle or in any other major combat operation have the chance to prove itself through prudent dispositions; it proves itself through its bravery, through energetic assault, through firm and orderly resistance against persistent gun battle.'[47] Clausewitz was careful not to pass too obvious a judgement on the contrast between regular units and light units in his lectures. However, in his letters to his fiancée, Marie von Brühl, whom Clausewitz had married in December 1810, he had been less guarded. On 18 September 1806, he had written to her from his temporary base in Gerbstädt in the county of Mansfeld:

> The passing of the military crowd really leaves a quite aesthetic impression; but one must not think of our parades. Here it is not, as in the parades, rigid troop

[45] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 239.

[46] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 213; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 89). The notion of the 'free play' of human faculties or the spirit went back to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's aesthetic theory as he presented it in *Laokoon* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2012 [1766]), 26: 'Only those things are fertile that allow the imagination free play.'

[47] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 239.

> lines that meet the eye; rather one can discern in the open formations the individual in its singularity, and the dominant feature, beside the steadily progressing motion, is one of plurality and expression of life.[48]

The sections of the lectures that follow these introductory parts are largely tactical in nature and do not differ much from other tactical manuals on small war. Yet, what sets Clausewitz's lectures apart from the writings of his predecessors is that he considered instances of popular insurrections, often in passing and in the context of detailed tactical instructions, hence obviously subsuming them in the category of small war. In a section on mountain defiles, for instance, he instructed his students that 'one ought to position oneself right next to the path in the least accessible part of the mountains [. . .]; if one does not possess any artillery pieces. This is the way that the Tyrol insurgents would do it, and it is indisputably the best option that one has.'[49] At no point did Clausewitz systematically discuss the difference between partisan warfare and people's war; rather, his approach was to weave comments and ideas into the tactical instructions that he delivered to his students.

What is notable in Clausewitz's elaborations on people's war in his lectures is the frequency with which he considered the relevance of small-war tactics in the history of war. A point he repeatedly made was that, in the context of the nationalization of war, small-war tactics had become *more* rather than less important:

> In citizen-soldiers' wars [*bürgerliche Kriege*] and in cases of the people in arms [*Nationalbewafnungen*] etc. these cases [that require secret marches] occur more often than was otherwise the case; if today armies themselves undertake them only rarely or not at all, one ought not to think that they have lost their importance; on the contrary, they have become more important.[50]

Clausewitz's genuine and innovative contribution to the small war literature consisted in broadening the category of small war to include people's war. In his lectures, he outlined the tactical potential of people's war *in nuce*:

> In cases of a people in arms defending their territory, as Spain is currently organizing and the Tyrol already has organized, in civil wars such as in the Vendée, almost all engagement are attacks on small defensive posts, or at least these occur most frequently. The *Landsturm* crowds can hardly undertake any other operations; this is what provides them with the highest degree of security. The large number of defensive posts that the occupying force has to establish provide ample opportunity for such operations.[51]

[48] Carl to Marie, 18 September 1806, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 58.
[49] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 311.
[50] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 380; see also i. 440.
[51] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 394.

What Clausewitz hinted at in this context is that such repeated attacks, even though they utilized the most basic tactics and were unlikely to be decisive in themselves, could have a strategic effect in the long run. Such considerations were part of Clausewitz's overarching appreciation of the changing character of war in his lifetime. The most explicit argument about this historical change is to be found in the lectures' appendix on foraging. Foraging was arguably not part of small war proper, but it formed part of the responsibilities of the general staff, which Clausewitz also had to cover in his lectures.[52] Clausewitz wrote:

> War will not turn back into a mechanical art [*Handwerkswesen*], as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, any time soon. The Swiss have not waged war in this way. Neither did the Mongols or the Arabs. As soon as a big and lively interest comes into play, that is, as soon as war becomes serious and ceases to be a game, we will necessarily encounter the phenomenon that we have already witnessed during the [French] Revolutionary Wars, an accelerated, lively course of the events of war. Even if one imagines a future that is not characterized by the superiority of the emperor of France and his army, war will still feature a much more lively tempo, and the urgent need that drives it [the war] will seek to end it quickly. Thus phenomena that characterized war in the previous centuries will hardly occur, where one simply sought to manoeuvre [*den Feldzug hinzubringen suchte*], without losing anything significant.[53]

This paragraph is significant, inasmuch as it both echoes a thought that Clausewitz had presented in his *Strategie* text and anticipates the intellectual moves he was to make during his crisis of 1826–7.[54] In 1804, Clausewitz had already written that 'the political end of war can be of dual nature', a formula he returned to in his often-quoted note from 1827.[55] At the end of book VI of *On War*, the writing of which presumably prompted the onset of Clausewitz's crisis of 1826–7, he echoed his observation about the relevance of strategic manoeuvre before the French Revolutionary Wars and stated that strategic manoeuvre had been regarded as a 'game' that presented 'the apogee of the art of war'.[56] On the whole, Clausewitz's intermittent elaborations on the changing character of war in his lectures on small war support the thesis that his 'turn' towards the dual nature of war and the central role of *Politik* for the practice of warfare in 1827 was not a sudden revelation, but a theme that he had pursued throughout his career and that he simply re-evaluated and rebalanced in the face of the theoretical problems that he encountered in 1826–7.[57]

[52] Hahlweg, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg: Vorbemerkung', ii. 220.
[53] Clausewitz, 'Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg', i. 451.
[54] Cf. Ch. 5, p. 124ff.
[55] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 51; 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 179 (*On War*, 69).
[56] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 855; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 515).
[57] Cf. Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 321; Strachan, *Carl von Clausewitz's* On War, 172. In contrast, Beatrice Heuser stated that 'Clausewitz analysed only the Napoleonic wars in his earlier theoretical writings [...] In all these texts dating from before 1827, political considerations are

THE RELEVANCE OF CLAUSEWITZ'S *LECTURES ON SMALL WAR*

As has already been noted, Clausewitz's lectures have been largely overlooked, both by the historical Clausewitz scholarship and by more recent studies. This is understandable; in as far as they cover a vast amount of tactical detail, much of which does not travel well to subsequent eras. Moreover, even though it reveals his mastery of the subject, his treatment of tactics was not—and was not in fact meant to be—particularly innovative. In large parts, Clausewitz relied on the texts of his predecessors and contemporaries, such as Ewald, Emmerich, and Scharnhorst. Those who studied Clausewitz's lectures, such as Werner Hahlweg, correctly pointed out that they are interesting to the extent that they include anticipations of themes that were to recur in *On War*, such as the definition of strategy and tactics, the relationship between the defensive and the offensive, and some considerations of the qualities of military command. Hahlweg also argued that Clausewitz's dialectical method of reasoning was already visible in the lectures, and that this was what set the lectures apart from the writings of Ewald, Emmerich, and Scharnhorst.

Still, what these assessments have not taken into account is the extent to which Clausewitz's lectures on small war shed light on his overall intellectual development. This applies to three themes in particular. First, in his lectures Clausewitz was inspired by Ewald in particular to ponder the political and social significance of partisan warfare. He went beyond Ewald in fusing the tactical level of partisan warfare with the social and political level of considerations about the qualities of the new model of the citizen–soldiers. Secondly, and closely related, in developing the ideal *Landsturm* and *Landwehr* combatant from the model of the Hessian *Jäger*, Clausewitz was forced to ride roughshod over the actual historical context of the campaigns fought by the *Jäger* during the American War of Independence. Here we encounter a Clausewitz who handles historical examples in an extremely selective fashion that borders on naive romanticism. This romanticism provided the necessary foundation for Clausewitz's advocacy of people's war. Crucially, it gives us vital insights into Clausewitz's political development in the years 1810–12. Finally, and in stark contrast to his ahistorical romanticization of the Hessian *Jäger*, Clausewitz interlaced his lectures with observations on the historicity of war. While the subject of historical change in war is obviously highly relevant for the mature Clausewitz who revised *On War*, his early thoughts on the topic also hint at the fact that in 1810–12 the young Clausewitz developed a certain historicism that was aimed at criticizing a naive Enlightenment belief in history as progress.

eclipsed, never appearing to have a direct influence on the conduct of war' (Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 29).

The Fusion of the Tactical and the Political Levels of War

Highlighting the political dimension of war has often been described as Clausewitz's main contribution to the study of war. Arguably, Clausewitz did not pioneer this argument; rather, his colleague August Rühle von Lilienstern had already stated in 1808 that the analysis of the 'interweaving' of war and statecraft ought to be the focus of strategic thought.[58] The cold-war reception of Clausewitz narrowed down the relationship between war and *Politik* to an instrumental understanding of war and zoomed in on the famous formula of 'war as a continuation of policy by other means'. Even if this understanding is reductionist, most students of Clausewitz agree that the relationship between war and *Politik* formed a red thread in Clausewitz's thinking, a central concern around which much of his intellectual development evolved.[59]

The definition of strategy that Clausewitz gave as early as 1804 in his *Strategie* text is that 'strategy is the *Lehre* [teaching/science/doctrine] of the use of individual engagements for the *Zweck* [often translated as purpose, but end is more accurate] of war'.[60] *Zweck* is a notion that Clausewitz used to indicate the interweaving of war and *Politik*; he often framed it as the 'political end of war'.[61] Evidently, for Clausewitz strategy is the level or the context where war and *Politik* meet, where the interweaving takes place.

Yet, what Clausewitz did in his lectures on small war was to fuse *Politik* with *tactics* rather than with strategy. He effectively developed the notion of a new type of combatant from the tactical requirements of small war: his individuality, the balance of fear and prudence—an emotional balance, which in turn had to be balanced against rationality—the meritocracy in the organization of light troops, and a new idea of discipline that left behind *Kadavergehorsam*—blind obedience to orders for fear of punishment—in favour of self-discipline. These arguments reflected the spirit of the Prussian military reform movement; and Clausewitz found them embodied in the writings of Ewald. The reform of the Prussian military justice system, for instance, was one of the central concerns of Clausewitz's colleague Gneisenau. In 1808, Gneisenau had published a newspaper article in which he proclaimed that the 'Freiheit der Rücken', the freedom of the soldiers' backs from corporal punishment, was the precondition for the introduction of the universal draft in Prussia.[62]

[58] Anders Palmgren, 'Clausewitz's Interweaving of *Krieg* and *Politik*', in Herberg-Rothe, Honig, and Moran (eds), *Clausewitz*, 50.

[59] e.g. Palmgren, 'Clausewitz's Interweaving of *Krieg* and *Politik*', 69.

[60] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 62.

[61] e.g. Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 51.

[62] Gneisenau, quoted in Sylvia Kesper-Biermann, '"Jeder Soldat ist eine Staatsbürger": Reformen im Militärstrafrecht in Deutschland 1800 bis 1872', in *Reform, Reorganisation, Transformation: Zum Wandel in deutschen Streitkräften von den preußischen Heeresreformen bis zur Transformation der Bundeswehr*, ed. Karl-Heinz Lutz, Martin Rink, and Marcus von Salisch (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010), 144.

The relationship between tactics and *Politik* that emerges from Clausewitz's lectures on small war is mainly an exemplary and educational one. In this context Clausewitz echoed Ewald, who had advocated the training of all troops as light troops in order to ensure that their tactical performance met the requirements of new battlefield tactics such as those that Ewald had witnessed in North America. Yet, Clausewitz's appreciation of the exemplary and educational value of small-war tactics goes far beyond considerations of military success. His lectures lay the foundations of his argument that small war as people's war could produce a new kind of soldier and, ultimately, a new kind of political individual—an argument that would become much clearer in his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* of 1812.[63] War in its existential and transformative dimension tied together tactics, strategy, and *Politik*: the tactics of small war liberated men from the cog mentality of line troops and instilled in them a sense of self-reliance and self-discipline. As Martin Rink argued: 'The notion of people's war was, among other things, a polemic against the mercenary armies of the *ancien régime*.'[64] Self-reliance and self-discipline were not only desirable military qualities; rather, they were also qualities that were needed in order to ensure that political reform did not end up in demagoguery and terror. At the same time, small-war tactics—limited attacks on defensive outposts—opened up the potential of strategic success in people's war in that they, if successful, robbed the occupying power of the political will to continue with the war effort. The Peninsular War was Clausewitz's model, both in his lectures and in the *Bekenntisdenkschrift*.[65]

By putting Clausewitz in charge of the small-war lectures at the Berlin *Kriegsschule*, Scharnhorst had nudged him into the direction of exploring the links between partisan warfare and people's war. Clausewitz took up the challenge without hesitation. His lecture scripts reflect the insights he gained from this exploration. The lectures themselves were obviously not the appropriate format to advertise his ideas on the strategic potential of a Prussian *Landsturm*, but they laid the intellectual foundations for Clausewitz's more openly political writings that he drafted during his time as an instructor at the *Kriegsschule*.

The Birth of the *Landsturm* from the Spirit of the Hessian *Jäger*

It is ironic that it was the example of the Hessian *Jäger* corps that inspired Clausewitz to explore the tactical foundations of partisan warfare and further

[63] Cf. Ch. 3, p. 80ff.

[64] Martin Rink, 'Preußisch-deutsche Konzeptionen zum "Volkskrieg" im Zeitalter Napoleons', in *Reform, Reorganisation, Transformation*, ed. Lutz, Rink, and Salisch, 68.

[65] Cf. Werner Hahlweg, 'Vorbemerkung: Précis de la guerre en Espagne et en Portugal', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 600.

to develop these into a political concept of people's war. Clausewitz used the Peninsular War as proof of the strategic potential of people's war. However, his short essay entitled 'Précis de la guerre en Espagne et en Portugal', written in 1811, reflects how little Clausewitz knew about the tactical reality of the war in Spain. He covered major operations of the Napoleonic forces and engagements fought between them and the British troops, but he failed to mention one single *partida* commander, for instance.[66] Thus, to a certain extent, Clausewitz used the example of the Hessian *Jägers*, whose history had been well publicized by Ewald and Emmerich, to compensate for a lack of tactical knowledge about those operations that fitted more squarely into the category of people's war.

The irony in this compensatory move on the part of Clausewitz was that the Hessians were a prime exponent of the *ancien régime*. They were mercenaries, often pressed into service or forced to enlist through a lack of alternative options. Not only were the Hessians 'hired guns' fighting on behalf of George III in the American War of Independence, for which George paid the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel handsomely; the majority of the 'Hessians' were not actually native to Hesse-Kassel, but recruited from other German principalities. Even Ewald himself referred to the Hessians as the 'refuse of mankind', whose only chance of survival consisted in enlisting.[67]

Arguably, the *Jäger* corps, as specialists, presented the elite of this mercenary force. Consequently, they could demand the highest prices.[68] In his *Treatise on the Service of Light Troops*, Ewald repeatedly insisted that the recruits in this elite unit consisted entirely of 'volunteers'.[69] But, even the *Jäger* recruits were often actually forced to enlist by dint of a colourful past and a troubled social and financial background.[70]

However, the Hessians' political *Weltanschauung* turned them into even more unlikely role models of military reform. In America, they found themselves fighting against a people's war and were unable to relate to the politics of the American Revolution. According to Rodney Atwood:

> The new society in America was not merely antithetical to the Hessian officers' ideas of life, it was completely beyond their range of experience. [...] The Hessians were both shocked and amused to find that horse doctors, salesmen, innkeepers, barbers, merchants, and smiths were officers in their enemy's army. Not merely was there no hierarchical and ordered society, but there was no prince dispensing honours, and the game of success and failure was played under totally

[66] Clausewitz, 'Précis de la guerre en Espagne et en Portugal', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 600.
[67] Ewald, quoted in Atwood, *The Hessians*, 212.
[68] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 211.
[69] Ewald, *Abhandlung von dem Dienst der leichten Truppen*, 16.
[70] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 212.

> different rules. Birth, education, breeding, even honour and courage counted for much less than industry and entrepreneurial skills.[71]

And, yet, there was a meritocratic element in the Hessians' way of soldiering: 'The Hessian army had to depend upon *esprit de corps* (identification with one's regiment) and loyalty to the prince himself. To secure this loyalty, the *Landgraf* had to be sure that his officers knew the fount of honour (promotion) remained open to them all.'[72] This was even truer for the *Jäger* corps, who enjoyed, as military specialists, a higher professional standing than their regular counterparts. More importantly, the *Jäger* specifically were also a source of tactical innovation and quick adaptation to new situations. In short, they were tactical vanguards. And their opponents recognized them as such: 'It is notable as witness to the Jäger effectiveness that American newspapers referred to the German woodsmen as "banditti", just as British soldiers and politicians spoke of the American militia.'[73] Contemporaries of the American War of Independence hence engaged in a form of tactical mirror-imaging between militia forces and *Jäger* that itself rode roughshod over the vast differences in their political motivations.

Even though Clausewitz's fusion of the tactical vanguard role of the Hessian *Jäger* with the political ideals of the Prussian military reform movement appears less surreal against this background, it clearly reflects a good deal of naive romanticism. The truth was that Clausewitz and his fellow reformers had little information about the practicalities of people's war. The solution for Clausewitz was to stretch the tactical example of the *Jäger* to a political ideal that the reality simply did not bear out. Yet in other respects Clausewitz proved remarkably sober and realistic with respect to the fusion of partisan tactics with people's war. The primary practical example was Ferdinand Schill's attempt in 1809 to lead his *Freikorps* into occupied Westphalia with a view to fomenting a popular uprising against the Napoleonic forces. Clausewitz's fiancée Marie, who was personally acquainted with Schill, was thrilled by his expedition. She referred to him as 'our hero' and reported to Clausewitz that 'the public is supposedly highly enthusiastic about the decision of its hero, and many people reportedly pledge allegiance to him in secret'.[74] Clausewitz himself doubted the feasibility of Schill's plan, even though he appreciated the spirit behind it, and wrote to Marie that he had the 'highest respect' for Schill.[75] Of course, Clausewitz was proved right: Schill's enterprise failed spectacularly, and he was captured and killed near Stralsund on 31 May 1809. Incidentally, Schill's end once again illustrated the irony of the military

[71] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 164; cf. Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of the Enlightenment, 1700–1789* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 165.
[72] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 163. [73] Atwood, *The Hessians*, 133.
[74] Marie to Carl, 29 April 1809, in *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, ed. Linnebach, 227.
[75] Carl to Marie, 10 May 1809, in *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, ed. Linnebach, 231.

reform movement's efforts to fuse partisan warfare and people's war: Schill was captured by a Danish unit commanded by Johann von Ewald, who, upon his return from America, had enlisted in service with the Danish Crown, hence once more underlining his *ancien régime* heritage.

The Historicity of War: Clausewitz's Critique of the Enlightenment Narrative of Progress

It has been widely noted that one of Clausewitz's core motivations in his early writings was a critique of Enlightenment strategic theory, which he, under the influence of Scharnhorst, had come to see as too formalistic, rigid, and mechanical.[76] Adam Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow was the preferred target for Clausewitz's scorn. Bülow's theory of war was in many respects the pinnacle of Enlightenment strategic thought. Success or victory in war could be calculated depending on how each of the opponents had organized his respective lines of operations. Battle had become superfluous. But, if the outcome of a potential war could be calculated in advance, there was in fact no point in waging it any more. The rationalization of strategy had rendered war obsolete:

> If [. . .] the true principles of this science were generally known, one would soon renounce war as fruitless, because the armies, equally trained in tactics and equally well led, could not defeat one another, and so the pointlessness of war would result in continuous peace, even if it [peace] was not to be borne out of the benevolent dispositions of the people of this earth.[77]

Bülow, notorious for his overconfidence, promised nothing less than the discovery of a strategic formula that would lead to perpetual peace. Just like Kant, whose 1795 essay *Toward Perpetual Peace* was based on the rationality of humankind rather than its 'benevolent dispositions', Bülow argued that, if reason prevailed, war would subside.[78]

Even if many Enlightenment thinkers did not go quite as far as Bülow in declaring war obsolete, there was a palpable emphasis on defensive forms for war. In this vein, Scharnhorst's mentor count Wilhem von Schaumburg wrote in 1775 that 'waging war offensively means succumbing to evil passions; subscribing to the defensive means serving the common good of humanity'.[79] As in so many instances, this thought is not entirely foreign to Clausewitz,

[76] e.g. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 78ff.

[77] Bülow, quoted in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 49; cf. Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 84ff.

[78] Immanuel Kant, *Zum Ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, ed. Rudolf Malter (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2008 [1795]).

[79] Schaumburg, quoted in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 38.

given the emphasis he himself placed on the strategic defensive. At the same time, he railed against the complacency that hopes for perpetual peace implied. In a short 1808 text, entitled 'On the Occasion of German Philosophers who Have the Best Intentions' he wrote:

> Vain, wretched, despicable philosophy, which wishes to place us on a pedestal, high above the turmoil of our present times, so we can avoid its pressures and all inner resistance in our chests ceases! They who replace the latter with dead trust in world government and its higher ends and who substitute cold reasoning as a spectator of God's work for the consuming fervour that is His tool![80]

The political context of Clausewitz's outburst is evident: in 1808, he increasingly despaired about the political situation of Prussia, whose elites proved too paralyzed to shake off the yoke of Napoleonic France. But the target of Clausewitz's scorn also consists in the naive progressivism of the Enlightenment that had for too long advocated 'cold reasoning' and 'dead trust' and had smothered any passionate impulse to act with its obsolete hope in the advent of perpetual peace. Clausewitz himself had, in his lifetime, experienced perpetual war rather than perpetual peace: at the time of this outburst, war had raged in Europe for sixteen years, even though, of course, Prussia had enjoyed neutrality from 1795 to 1806. To Clausewitz, it must have been obvious that the Enlightenment idea of history as progress towards peace had been disproven. Moreover, the expansionism of revolutionary France had belied the alleged pacifying effect of Enlightenment philosophy.

Clausewitz was not the first to criticize the excessive rationalism of Enlightenment strategic theory. Scharnhorst and, before him, Jacques Antoine Hippolyte comte de Guibert had argued that war was subject to historical transformations that were not necessarily rational and hence did not lead on a straight path towards progress.[81] Clausewitz's *Lectures on Small War* are significant in the framework of his emerging speculations about the historicity of war. They have to be evaluated in the context of Clausewitz's early historical writings, and in particular his essay on *Gustav Adolph's Campaigns of 1630–1632*, which he wrote during his first years in Berlin. According to Peter Paret, studying the Thirty Years War was an expression of Clausewitz's revolt against Enlightenment strategic thought: 'No doubt his decision to write about the Thirty Years War was meant as a protest against such systematizing military savants as Bülow and Massenbach, who could regard this emotional formless struggle only with a sense of horror and superiority.'[82] Indeed,

[80] Carl von Clausewitz, 'Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen', in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 211.

[81] On Scharnhorst, see Michael Sikora, 'Scharnhorst: Lehrer, Stabsoffizier, Reformer', in *Reform, Reorganisation, Transformation*, ed. Lutz, Rink, and Salisch, 56; on Guibert, see Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 45ff.

[82] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 86.

Clausewitz was scathing in his judgement on 'modern authors': 'Far from believing, as some modern authors do, that the Thirty Years War lasted so long only because the generals did not understand how to end it, we are confident that the recent wars have been ended so quickly only because of a lack of courage to mount the utmost resistance.'[83]

Clausewitz's turn towards partisan warfare followed the same pattern: while writers such as Bülow dismissed such messy and somewhat haphazard operations as a thing of the past, Clausewitz insisted on more than one occasion in his lecture scripts that operations by small detachments had become *more* relevant in the context of the Napoleonic Wars. Small-war tactics, which many regarded as backward, had their place in the future of war, Clausewitz insisted, precisely because the history of war did not progress steadily towards a perfectly rational end state. This argument was obviously partly motivated by the agenda of the military reform movement and its desire to find a tactical solution to Prussia's military crisis. But it was also an argument that fitted into Clausewitz's broader intellectual development between his early writings and the reform years.

It is unsurprising in this context that the small and inconspicuous excursion on 'Foraging' that formed part of the lectures' appendix contained one of the most elaborate sections on the history of war in Clausewitz's early writings. Against this background, it is hard to see how the young Clausewitz used historical studies for the 'search for universals' or, alternatively, how he misunderstood the essence of war as being embodied in the Napoleonic Wars.[84] At no point in his writings did Clausewitz endeavour to detect universal laws of history; and he was, as we have seen, deeply critical of any kind of teleological progressivism. If Clausewitz speculated at all on what caused change in the practice of warfare, he pondered the societal and political context as chief factors—a thought that he would formalize to a greater extent in his revisions of *On War* after 1827.

CONCLUSION

Clausewitz's *Lectures on Small Wars*, even though they are to a large extent devoted to tactical details and are not very innovative, have been unjustly ignored in large parts of the existing scholarship. They are intriguing inasmuch as they shed light on both his intellectual and his political development during the reform years.

[83] Carl von Clausewitz, 'Gustav Adolphs Feldzüge von 1630–1632', in Clausewitz, *Hinterlassene Werke*, ix (Berlin: Dümmlers, 1837), 18.

[84] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 84; Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 41.

Intellectually the lectures are relevant because they reflect core themes in Clausewitz's critique of Enlightenment strategic thought. Turning back to history in order to explore the practical problems of the present was a signature move of the early Clausewitz. It illustrates his deep dissatisfaction with the Enlightenment narrative of progress towards ever more rational forms of war, or even perpetual peace. Against the background of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Clausewitz could not subscribe to a progressivist view. He turned his historical interest to periods that the Enlightenment writers despised, such as the Thirty Years War. In the same spirit, he approached partisan warfare. Partisan warfare featured many traces of utterly backward forms of war: it was rooted in the ancient practices of border tribes; it had emerged from forms of military organization that were decidedly private and smacked of mercenarism; it had often been characterized by high levels of violence and a lack of central control and restraint. However, Clausewitz focused on the positive aspects of partisan warfare, the individualism it promoted, and its exemplary and educational nature, which would eventually lead him to believe in the transformative power of partisan warfare to turn into people's war.

Herein lay the problem: in contrast to his study of Gustav Adolphus's campaigns, Clausewitz's lectures were neither critical nor primarily motivated by academic inquisitiveness. Rather, from the very beginning, they evolved in tandem with the efforts of the Prussian reformers to organize a Prussian *Landsturm*. The tendency to idealize the character of the partisan and to ride roughshod over the differences between partisan warfare and a popular insurrection are all too obvious in those parts of the lectures that are innovative. Studying the lectures is indispensable for an in-depth understanding of Clausewitz's political writings in the reform years. Without any knowledge of Clausewitz's optimistic depiction of the partisan and his transformative characteristics, Clausewitz's hopes in the existential quality of war are difficult to grasp.

Yet, the overall assessment of the lectures is one characterized by multiple ironies: Clausewitz propped up the Hessian *Jäger*, a highly conservative mercenary force, as the role model for the progressive Prussian *Landsturm*. More importantly, he turned to the past in order to militate against the pitfalls of a naive Enlightenment progressivism. In doing so, however, the price that Clausewitz had to pay consisted in presenting a slightly naive and at times simply inaccurate picture of the past, which could not possibly serve as a model for the future.

3

‘The most beautiful of wars’

Clausewitz’s Perspective on People’s War

At the same time as Clausewitz was delivering his lectures on small war at the Berlin *Kriegsschule*, he worked amid his fellow Prussian military reformers on plans for a popular insurrection against French domination. Clausewitz held strong opinions on this highly political question and was not afraid to voice these in public, even though he chose to remain anonymous, as in his letter to Fichte, or to opt for a limited circulation, as was the case with the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, the ‘confession memorandum’. In his letter to Fichte, which is one of the earliest writings from the reform years, Clausewitz pondered a theme that he would also later cover in his lectures on small wars—namely, the significance of light units in contemporary warfare:

> The number of light troops, meaning those who fight individually, is now much larger in relation to the whole of the army than it was in ancient times, and in some forms of war, notably in the most beautiful of wars, which a people wages in its own territory for the sake of freedom and independence, this number can double with great benefit.[1]

What is noteworthy in this passage from Clausewitz’s letter to Fichte is that he interweaved his historical and tactical assessment with an openly moral and political comment: the tactical innovation that Napoleon had brought to the battlefield in the form of an increased use of open-order *tirailleur* lines was part and parcel of the changing social and political circumstances of war. *Contra* Fichte, he insisted that the ‘the purposeful use of our main weapon, the musket’, was not subject to ‘mere mechanical considerations’; rather, it was a matter of infantry training and morale. And, while infantry fire was important to prepare the battlefield, a decisive outcome hinged on the ‘enthusiastic bayonet charge’. Enthusiasm, in turn, was a result of the political system

[1] Clausewitz, ‘Ein ungenannter Militär an Fichte, als Verfasser des Aufsatzes über Machiavelli im ersten Bande der “Vesta”’, in *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, ed. Malmsten Schering, 72.

from which the soldier stemmed. This was the reason for the superiority of the French infantry that Europe had so far witnessed.[2]

What is even more striking than Clausewitz's political comment on the superiority of the French infantry, which in 1809 would have put him under the suspicion of 'Jacobinism', is the notion of people's war as 'the most beautiful of wars'. In order fully to grasp this notion, it is necessary to reconstruct the political and intellectual context in which the reform movement was operating. Clausewitz engaged with the intellectual currents of his time. Of particular relevance were the issues arising from Kantian philosophy and the Kantian legacy of the dualism of *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, which was paralleled by the dichotomy between the universal law of reason, on the one hand, and the postulate of individual freedom, on the other. Epistemological and politico-moral problems were tightly interwoven. As we shall see, the German poet–philosopher Friedrich Schiller, the Romantic poet Novalis, and the philosophy professor Johann Gottlieb Fichte emerge as significant figures in this context.[3] The central question that confronted all political philosophy around 1800 arose from the experience of *la Terreur*, the descent of the French Revolution into widespread political terror and persecution in 1793 and 1794: how can a polity be transformed without plunging it into chaos and violence?

The traditions of German Idealism and Romanticism shared the feature that they both reacted to the rifts and dichotomies in the Kantian legacy by emphasizing organic wholeness. The 'absolute' emerged into a symbol of the unity of the whole, in spite of the apparent epistemological and political rifts. The various 'Idealist' solutions to the problems arising from the Kantian legacy, such as Fichte's subjective Idealism, attempted to bridge the gap not only between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, but also between the *Stände*, between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, between the king and the people, between nature and humankind, and between art and science. The relationship between art and science is a topic that Clausewitz picked up in a prominent place in *On War*, in Chapter 3 of book II, entitled 'Art of war or science of war'.[4] In his writings from the reform years, his desire to integrate both aspects found its most important expression in the notion of 'the most beautiful of wars'. People's war is a 'beautiful war' because it is liberating, transformative, and unifying. As such, it can be considered as a moral war. More importantly, people's war is war in its existential form. As we shall see, that does not mean that war is being detached from *Politik*—on the contrary, people's war is supremely political. But war in its existential form differs from the

[2] Clausewitz, 'Ein ungenannter Militär', 72.

[3] Paret remarked in his preface to the 2007 edition of *Clausewitz and the State* that 'Clausewitz's appreciation of the works of Schiller deserves further study' (Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, p. xii).

[4] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 301ff; bk. II, ch. 3 (*On War*, 148ff).

instrumental understanding of war in that it *creates* its own political subject rather than merely realizing its subject's political ends.

What set Clausewitz's writings from the reform years apart from the rest of his oeuvre is their strongly vitalist and action-oriented under- and overtones. His appeal for action in order to save Prussia from French domination and, ultimately, its complete political downfall emerged from the broader background of his anti-mechanistic and anti-rationalistic leanings, which also characterize his critique of the strategic theories of the Enlightenment. In his reform writings, this anti-rationalism is coupled with what Hans Rothfels referred to as 'entschlossene Tatbereitschaft', a decisive eagerness for action, which echoed Fichte's exhortation from his 1794 'Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation', 'Act! Act!'[5] In order to discuss the meaning of Clausewitz's reform writings, it is indispensable to provide a 'thick description' of his intellectual and political context.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds in four steps: the next section provides the 'thick description' of the social and intellectual context of post-Kantian philosophy in Prussia and Germany around 1800. This context is fascinating in so far as it mixed intellectual debates with a dense network of personal relationships that spanned the cities of Berlin, Jena, and Weimar. The second part of the chapter locates Clausewitz himself in that intellectual network. This is a difficult task, which inevitably contains aspects of speculation and conjecture. However, a comparison of historical facts (such as Clausewitz's stay at Le Coppet with Mme de Staël and his membership of the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*) with his letters to Marie and Gneisenau allows us to reach some plausible conclusions. The third part introduces Clausewitz's writings from the reform era, which principally consist of his letter to Fichte and the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, supplemented by various undated and untitled notes, and his letters to Marie and Gneisenau. The fourth part is devoted to an exploration of the significance of these writings for Clausewitz's intellectual development. This section considers three aspects in particular: the dichotomy between reason and passion, the notions of probability, luck, and chance, and, finally, war in its existential form. The chapter will conclude that, while the dichotomy between passion and reason is an element that Clausewitz would retain and further develop in *On War*, he would revise the rather dismissive take on probability that his writings from the reform years reflect in his later work. But the core significance of the letter to Fichte and the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* lies in their discussion of war in its existential form. Clausewitz scholars have often pointed out that he never made clear what kind of political system he envisaged for a reformed Prussian state, but, since his writings from the reform years focused on war in its existential form, this was only logical: it was war itself that had to bring about social and political change.

[5] Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 130; Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation', in Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 154.

PRUSSIA 1795–1812: POLITICAL DWARF, INTELLECTUAL GIANT

At the time of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Prussia was a paradoxical entity: politically, it was prostrate, but intellectually, it was buzzing. Indeed, the chasm between these two aspects was one of the driving forces of the reform movement. Frederick William II's decision in 1795 to withdraw from the first coalition and to adopt a position of neutrality that his son and successor Frederick William III was to maintain until 1805 arguably allowed Prussia to consolidate its state finances and provided it with a breathing space in which cultural and academic institutions were able to flourish. Prussia's fate changed dramatically with its defeat by Napoleon in the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt in 1806. The Franco-Prussian Treaty of Tilsit of 9 July 1807 stipulated the withdrawal of the Napoleonic troops from Prussia, but at the same time it implied the loss of large parts of its territory and imposed crushing reparations. Napoleon had humiliated Frederick William III in the eyes of the world and had even rebuffed Queen Louise's attempts at Tilsit to broker better conditions for Prussia.[6] In 1809, the Prussian king dashed the nascent reform movement's hopes that Prussia would join Austria in its fight against France. The year 1810 marked the culmination of French expansionism across Europe. It was at the same time a political low point for Prussia.

Yet that year also saw the establishment of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, indicating that the vibrant intellectual atmosphere in Berlin had lost none of its momentum in the aftermath of Prussia's political defeat. It was in this environment that the political and military reform movement was founded; and the king, humiliated and publicly proven wrong in his pursuit of neutrality, had to grant increased discretion to its members. The reform years were thus akin to a short but intense axial age that was brought about by a variety of factors. First among these was, of course, the political crisis that spurred public debate. This debate fell on the fertile ground provided by the innovative impetus that Kant had created with his critical philosophy. It was further facilitated by the dense network of personal relationships among key cultural and academic figures such as the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Goethe, Schiller, and Schelling. These figures were interwoven and connected in overlapping social circles. Even though it would be wrong to argue that they were 'Kantians', it was certainly true that the Kantian legacy and its central problems provided an—albeit fuzzy—focal point and a sort of intellectual glue that structured the debate.

Prussia's political crisis had thrown up the problem of liberation as one of its core themes. The question was liberation for whom and from what? Was

[6] Jürgen Luh, *Der kurze Traum der Freiheit: Preußen nach Napoleon* (Munich: Siedler, 2016), 85ff.

Prussia's liberation from Napoleonic servitude the core objective? Or was it the liberation of the Prussian citizens from the decadence and ineffectiveness of absolute monarchy? Could one be achieved without the other? Some members of the intellectual network such as Friedrich Schlegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Novalis (aka Friedrich von Hardenberg) had displayed open pro-revolutionary leanings in the early 1790s. Yet, after the experience of the reign of terror in 1793 and 1794, it was increasingly difficult to uphold the French Revolution as a political ideal. Liberation had resulted in anarchy and unchecked violence. It had become obvious that the nascent republic lacked the republican virtues that were integral to enabling meaningful political processes and societal cohesion.

Friedrich Schiller had reacted to this crisis with the 1795 publication of his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (on which more later in this chapter), in which he suggested that men's republican virtues had to be fostered through aesthetic education so as to prevent an emerging republic from sinking into political chaos.[7] Fichte, grappling with the same problem, pointed out that Schiller's suggestion did not solve the chicken and egg problem of liberation and education:

> If it is on the one hand not advisable to give freedom to man before his aesthetic sense is developed, it is on the other hand impossible to develop the latter before he is free; and the idea to lead man to the appreciation of freedom through aesthetic education and hence to freedom itself gets us into a vicious circle unless we find a means beforehand of awakening the courage in some individuals out of the great multitude to be nobody's master and nobody's slave.[8]

Novalis, in his *Glauben und Liebe* fragment, which was first published in 1798, chose yet a different path to the reconciliation of individual freedom and republican virtue: societal unity had to be symbolized in the figure of the ideal monarch; and the love between Friedrich Wilhelm III and Queen Louise could be extended to signify the possibility of altruistic societal bonds that would overcome egotism and decadence.[9] In order to understand the specific way in which this debate was framed, we have to turn for a moment to the legacy of Kantian philosophy.

Kant's Legacy

By the 1790s Immanuel Kant had acquired the status of an overarching figure in German intellectual debates. The reaction to Prussia's political crisis played

[7] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004 [1795]).

[8] Fichte, quoted in Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 59.

[9] Novalis, *Schriften*, ii. *Das philosophische Werk I*, ed. Richard Samuel, Hans Joachim Mähl, and Gerhard Schulz (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982), 593.

out in reference to Kantian philosophy. A central concern that bound together Romanticism and Idealism was a desire for unity, both as a reaction to the problem of dualism in Kant's philosophical legacy and as a response to Prussia's (and Germany's) political crisis. As a result, questions of epistemology, science, theology, and art acquired an almost inevitable political relevance.

One of the core problems in Kant's epistemology, as well as his moral philosophy, is the relationship between universal reason and individual freedom. The assumption of universal reason is the precondition for moral autonomy per se: if men do not possess reason, they cannot be entrusted with moral autonomy. However, if the world, including all human activities, are 'caught up in a causal web that excluded any activities freely determined', how can man act as an autonomous individual?[10] In other words, there appears to be a split between the transcendental ego that was invested with the ability to understand the causal determination of phenomena, on the one hand, and the moral ego that acted autonomously, on the other.

Kant's third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgement*, was partly intended to resolve this dilemma: 'Aesthetic judgement, which occupies Kant in the first part of the *Critique* [...] suggests a way of making intelligible the relation between determinate nature and free human behaviour'.[11] In the *Critique of Judgement*, beauty, and indeed also the artist him or herself, became a symbol of the unification of the transcendental and the moral ego: the artistic genius integrates freedom in the artistic process with the expression of innate rules of beauty, of which he or she, however, is not conscious. Kant's notion of genius hints at the idea of the artist as someone who possesses superior faculties and who is closer to nature than other individuals are—an idea that would become increasingly important in the framework of the romantic conception of 'genius'. But what was even more important in the context of Kant's philosophy was that beauty entailed moral qualities.

According to Kant, knowledge based on experiences involves three faculties: sensibility, imagination, and understanding. The third of these faculties, understanding, allows the human mind to sort its experiences according to rational concepts. The characteristic feature of the aesthetic experience, Kant argued, is that it initiates a process in which sensibility and understanding enter into a 'free play' of 'harmonious activity' in which neither gains the upper hand, as it were, but one furthers the other and vice versa.[12] This evidently indicates that rationality—understanding—plays a central part in the aesthetic experience, but it is not its ultimate arbiter. The process is an infinite one, meaning that the mind never arrives at a 'concept', at an ultimate

[10] Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[11] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 69.

[12] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1790]), §9. Kant's notion of 'free play' goes back to Lessing's *Laokoon.* Cf. Chapter 2.

interpretation.[13] Kant's idea of beauty comprises a number of features: beauty is a concrete experience; it is sensual without being linked to immediate interests (such as appetite or sexual desire); the experience of beauty is inherently social, as the judgement of taste is universal, even though it cannot be subsumed under a rational concept; finally, the experience of beauty has a vitalizing effect on all human faculties, inasmuch as they enter into a free play of harmonious activity. For Kant, 'the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good'.[14] The concept of morality inhabits the realm of rationality, but it cannot be experienced through the senses. Moral notions such as freedom can be derived in a rational way, but they lack empirical demonstrability. In this sense, the experience of beauty is the counterpart of the concept of morality: the first is empirical without ever arriving at a rational concept; the second is conceptual, but devoid of empirical content.

Fichte and Schelling derationalized notions that Kant had sketched in his third *Critique*. Profound epistemological differences between Fichte and Schelling notwithstanding, art featured as a medium through which one can find unity, both within the split self, between the self and society, and between humanity and nature. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant had laid the groundwork for the idea that beauty and art could have a transformative power. Robert Richards, who subsumes both Fichte and Schelling under his overarching concepts of Romanticism, concludes that, 'with the Romantics, moral actions became modelled on aesthetic acts, and morality itself became aestheticized'.[15]

The legacy of Kantian philosophy prompted a search for unity to overcome the various dualisms, which Kant himself had attempted to bridge in the *Critique of Judgement*. This search for unity characterized both the German Romantic movement and the philosophy of German Idealism. The boundaries of both Romanticisim and Idealism are fuzzy, and they both overlapped with each other and also with the (even fuzzier) notion of Humanism, understood as a prescriptive concept that promoted the full realization of the individual through the education of all its faculties and potentials. Both Romanticism and Humanism addressed the individual as an organic human being that possessed both cognitive and sensual faculties. It would be too schematic to describe this comprehensive and organic approach simply as presenting a 'counter-Enlightenment' move, given that Kant himself had partly ventured into that direction, even though his third *Critique* remained overwhelmingly rationalist. But what unified various approaches and ideas that were discussed

[13] Clausewitz's essay 'Über den Begriff des körperlich Schönen' has clear Kantian influences, which indicate that he had either read the third *Critique* or heard about it in lectures. Printed in Malmsten Schering (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, 151–4. Cf. José Fernández Vega, 'War as "Art": Aesthetics and Politics in Clausewitz's Social Thinking', in *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Rothe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 122–37.

[14] Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* §59.

[15] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 71.

in Germany around 1800 was a reaction against an exaggerated rationalism that was seen as too mechanistic. Novalis's fragmentary text *Glauben und Liebe* is once again illustrative of this: 'No state has been more managed like a factory than Prussia since the death of Frederick William I. While such a machine-like administration may be necessary for the physical health, strength and sophistication of the state, a state that is merely treated that way will perish.'[16] The nature of Novalis's critique of a mechanistic administration is republican in its motivation: rationalism in the realm of politics equals individualistic utilitarianism, which cannot provide the social glue necessary for a strong state. *Sinnlichkeit*, sensuality, needs to be refined in order to lift men onto a higher moral ground.

Clausewitz would echo core themes of this broad debate, which encompassed a variety of positions. The dualism of reason and passion and the need to harmonize both and the anti-mechanistic impetus of his thinking are core themes that characterized his intellectual development from his early writings to his death. What remains to be discussed is whether there are plausible indications that Clausewitz developed them through an engagement with his contemporary intellectual context. In order to answer that question, we first have to reconstruct the social network in which this debate evolved, before we move on to Clausewitz's exposure to it.

The Romantics, Humanists, and Idealists

What is more important than the question of how to define and categorize the various 'isms' that sprang up in Germany around 1800 is the fact that many of their central figures formed a social network that was at the same time exceptionally dense in some parts and far-reaching in its margins and peripheries. It spanned the eastern German cities of Jena, Weimar, and Berlin. The centre of this network was the house of August Wilhelm Schlegel and his wife, Caroline Michaelis Böhmer, in Jena. They had moved to Jena in 1796 at the suggestion of Friedrich Schiller, who himself lived there. August Wilhelm Schlegel regularly contributed to Schiller's periodical *Die Horen* until he and his brother Friedrich broke with Schiller in 1797. The causes of the break were both personal and political. Principally, they revolved around Caroline Michaelis Böhmer Schlegel, whom both Schiller and Goethe deemed too revolutionary.[17] After the Schlegels' break with Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel moved to Berlin, where he met the young theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who served as a chaplain in the *Charité* at the time.

[16] Novalis, *Schriften*, ii. 587.

[17] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 51.

Schiller was one of the closest friends of Goethe, who lived in Weimar. Schiller also served as a mentor to the young Romantic poet Novalis. Novalis's first fragments were published in 1798 in the *Athenäum*, a periodical that the Schlegel brothers edited. Johann Gottlieb Fichte also resided in Jena between 1794 and 1799, where he held a chair in philosophy at the university. During his time in Jena, Fichte developed his transcendental Idealism, which was intensely discussed by the Jena circle. In 1797 the 22-year-old philosophy prodigy Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling joined the philosophy faculty in Jena. Schelling had been educated in the Tübinger Stift, a protestant seminary in the Duchy of Württemberg. There he had studied alongside the later Romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Schiller admired Schelling. Goethe took an intense interest in Schelling's work, as it increasingly seemed to hold greater promise for the foundations of his own philosophy of nature than Fichte's subjective Idealism.[18] Schelling, for his part, developed an intense friendship with August Wilhelm Schlegel and his wife Caroline—in the case of the latter, so intense indeed that she divorced August Wilhelm in 1801 and finally married Schelling in 1803.

It was during the year 1801 that the Jena circle came to an end. Novalis died, aged only 28, of tuberculosis. August Schlegel moved to Berlin, while his brother Friedrich, who had been back in Jena for some time, in 1802 left for Paris. Fichte had already been forced to leave Jena in 1799, after a dispute over allegations of atheism. In 1810, the foundation of the Friedrich Wilhelm University by Wilhelm von Humboldt in Berlin created a new centre of gravity that attracted many of those who had been linked to the Jena circle. Among the university's inaugural professors were Fichte, Schleiermacher, and the jurist and historian Friedrich Carl von Savigny. Hegel joined the philosophy faculty in 1818, while Schelling had relocated to Würzburg and later to Munich. He moved to Berlin only in 1841.

In 1811, the Romantic poet Achim von Arnim and the writer Adam Heinrich Müller founded the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* in Berlin. Arnim had connections to both Goethe and Friedrich Schlegel. In 1806, he had followed the Prussian royal court to Königsberg, where he involved himself in the political debate in the circle around Baron vom Stein. The *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft* counted Schleiermacher, Fichte, Savigny, and Heinrich von Kleist among its original members—and Carl von Clausewitz. Clausewitz was not the only officer on the members' list of the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*; Baron Ludwig August Friedrich von Chasot, Colonel von Hacke, Adam Georg Friedrich von Horn, August von Hedemann, Johann Carl von Moellendorff, and Clausewitz's colleague from the *Kriegsschule*, Karl Ludwig von Tiedemann, were also members.

[18] Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life*, 166.

This brief outline illustrates that there existed a dense network of poets, writers, and intellectuals that spanned Prussia and other German principalities in Clausewitz's lifetime. The implication of this is not that their thinking was homogenous. On the contrary, there were a variety of theoretical positions and political opinions, which in fact made this network highly fertile, if also highly fragile, as illustrated by the various rifts within it. The point is that the existence of this network provided an intellectual backdrop against which Prussia's—and Germany's—political crisis after 1806 could be evaluated and discussed. Owing to the high intellectual calibre of many of the individuals involved in this network, this debate easily interweaved philosophical ideas with political positions. But before we can address the question to what extent Clausewitz engaged with these ideas, we have to explore whether and how he was exposed to this network.

CLAUSEWITZ'S EXPOSURE TO THE ROMANTIC–HUMANIST–IDEALIST NETWORK

Given his rather modest and not exactly high-flying intellectual origins, Clausewitz had not been predestined to become involved in the social, intellectual, and political network outlined in the previous section, even if only on the peripheries. Scharnhorst's mentorship was the decisive twist of fate in this respect. Scharnhorst thought highly of Clausewitz's potential. Upon his graduation from the *Kriegsschule* in 1804, Scharnhorst recommended him as adjutant to Prince August. This position granted Clausewitz access to the Prussian court. It also meant that Clausewitz had to follow Prince August into captivity after August's battalion had surrendered on 28 October 1806 near Prenzlau, in the wake of Prussia's defeat in Jena and Auerstedt. August and Clausewitz spent ten months in French captivity. They were released following the conclusion of the Tilsit peace treaty between France and Prussia in July 1807. However, owing to a delay in the issue of their travel documents, they could not travel back to Berlin immediately. They had to stop over in Switzerland, where they were hosted by Germaine de Staël, a Franco-Swiss salonnière and declared opponent of Napoleon, at her chateau in Coppet near Lausanne.

The impression that Clausewitz's letters to Marie from Coppet give is that, even though he must have been keen to return to Berlin, he enjoyed his stay at Coppet; and the long discussions with Staël and her guests and acquaintances played a prime role in this.[19] Moreover, they seem to have reignited

[19] Among them was the educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose educational institution was nearby at Yverdun. Clausewitz wrote a short essay inspired by the work of Pestalozzi in 1807, printed in Karl Schwartz, *Das Leben des Generals Carl von Clausewitz und der*

Clausewitz's political passions and his hope in Prussia's revival. On 1 September 1807, he wrote to Marie:

> There is a way to save us, if the worst draws near; but there is nothing common in this way, everything is resolute and extraordinary, and only in this region can we prevail over our enemies and achieve a better, in any case a more honourable lot. [...] If men have relegated our human nature, then men have to be able to ennoble it again; I am not talking about peace and its feeble means; war opens up a wide array of energetic means, and if I were to tell you the most secret thoughts of my soul, I am in favour of the most violent ones; I would rouse the languid animal with whiplashes and teach it to break the chains in which it has cowardly and timidly allowed itself to be shackled.[20]

In his first letter, dating from 16 August 1807, Clausewitz wrote to his fiancée, Marie, from Coppet in glowing tones about their hostess:

> It is impossible to be a greater admirer of German literature and German women than Mme de Staël. [...] I talked to her about the magnificent peculiarity of our language, that it allowed even the mediocre person to be original owing to its wealth and freedom, whereas in the French language one finds all these prefabricated thoughts and thus one always has to use forms that were coined by others.[21]

The differences between the French and the German languages were a topic that Clausewitz had recurrently pondered in the notes and fragments he wrote during his captivity in France.[22] The gist of these writings was always that the French language left little room for individuality and originality. In his letter from 16 August 1807, he happily reported to Marie that Friedrich Schlegel had had a similar idea, conveyed to him by Staël: 'Then she quoted an idea of Friedrich Schlegel, which is amusing. It is incredible, he said, how splendid nature is in France; it has produced 30 million copies of one single original person.'[23]

As it happened, Friedrich's brother August Wilhelm Schlegel was residing at Coppet as a house tutor at the time of Clausewitz's stay:

> Above all, I was delighted to make Schlegel's acquaintance. He is a brave, good-natured, patriotic German, who possesses a well-conditioned hate towards the French and has generally the most genuine German features, so that a person like myself is incapable of not loving him. [...] He is my sole consolation [...]'[24]

Frau Marie von Clausewitz geb. Gräfin von Brühl, in *Briefen, Tagebüchern, Aufsätzen und anderen Schriftstücken*, i (Berlin: Dümmlers, 1878), 272ff. Cf. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 182ff.

[20] Carl to Marie, 1 September 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 134ff.
[21] Carl to Marie, 16 August 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 132ff.
[22] Cf. Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 229.
[23] Carl to Marie, 16 August 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 133.
[24] Carl to Marie, 1 September 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 138.

This indicates that Clausewitz spent a good deal of his time in Coppet in A. W. Schlegel's company. He went on to inform Marie that 'Schlegel occasionally reads some of his texts to me, which gives me great pleasure'. There were some obvious points of common interest between Clausewitz and A. W. Schlegel, the most central of which was, again, the relationship between language and national character. Schlegel, and Mme de Staël herself, for that matter, who was in 1807 planning a book on Germany entitled *De l'Allemagne*, which would be published in 1810, were inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder's explorations on the notion of the nation as a historically, culturally, and linguistically specific development (*contra* the cosmopolitanism and universalism of the Enlightenment). While Staël's intention in her book *De l'Allemagne* was 'to point to what France did not have, but might have, if it let another nation be its guide and inspiration, Schlegel's motive in his comparative approach to European drama was to extoll the virtues of German drama and the German language more generally as a foundation for Germany's political rebirth'.[25] The gist of both Schlegel's and Staël's take on the differences between the German and the French languages and national characters were similar, though, and they must have appealed to Clausewitz. The French language was all form and no substance; it subdued individuality and authenticity, whereas the German language encouraged these traits.

In spite of the evident congeniality between Schlegel and Clausewitz regarding the appreciation of national language and culture, Clausewitz clarified to Marie: 'this [Schlegel reading him his texts] does not bring me any closer to his point of view, and I do not appreciate his brother's poetry.'[26] Peter Paret concluded from this that there was a 'profound division in attitudes that separated Clausewitz from the Romantics'.[27] And indeed, in a note dating from 1808 or 1809, Clausewitz criticized 'the spirit of the latest sects', which prided themselves of a 'mysticism' that subordinated 'all human understanding to obscure images of phantasy, vague feelings'. He quite clearly understood that this was a reaction against the contemporary *Hang zum Vernünfteln*, a tendency towards over-rationalization. But, Clausewitz held, the 'sects' had gone too far with their emphasis on phantasy and emotion.[28] Yet, in his letter to Marie from Coppet, Clausewitz did not elaborate where precisely he differed from A. W. Schlegel. A. W. Schlegel himself was not a mysticist—he was a literary critic with a strong appreciation for Romantic poetry. But he also understood himself to be a cosmopolitan, and saw no contradiction between his cosmopolitanism and his German nationalism that was far less fervent and

[25] Roger Paulin, *The Life of August Wilhelm Schlegel: Cosmopolitan of Art and Poetry* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016), 340. On Herder, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 98ff.

[26] Carl to Marie, 1 September 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 147.

[27] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 135, n. 33.

[28] Clausewitz, untitled note, quoted in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 228.

aggressive than Fichte's in the *Addresses to the German Nation*.[29] This may have been the real bone of contention between Clausewitz and A. W. Schlegel. At any rate, the theme of German national language and national character as a basis for a national rebirth was sufficiently important for Clausewitz to include it in his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*—and the roots of his musings on this topic were obviously in Soissons and Coppet.[30]

Moreover, Clausewitz seemed to be more ambivalent towards romantic themes and poetry than his dismissal of 'mysticism' seems to indicate. In the letter to Marie already quoted he admitted that, even though he did not appreciate F. Schlegel's poetry on the whole, there were 'some beautiful things among it' and recommended to Marie in particular a poem he thought was entitled 'Das Sinnbild', the allegory. 'Nothing has ever moved me more deeply,' he added.[31] The poem that Clausewitz had in mind was in fact entitled 'Bild des Lebens', symbol of life. F. Schlegel's short poem sketches the picture of a blind man, guided through the darkness of night by 'the hand of compassion'. But even though he is blind, he feels the rays of the rising sun 'with his heart', and it is this emotional sensitivity to the sunlight that allows him finally to triumph over his blindness.[32]

Moreover, what seems to be more important than the question of whether Clausewitz liked or agreed with Romantics such as the Schlegel brothers is that his stay at Coppet and his conversations with A. W. Schlegel evidently pushed him to ponder issues such as the relationship between sensuality, phantasy, and emotion, on the one hand, and reason, on the other. Furthermore, his note dating from 1808 or 1809 reflects his consideration of the need to harmonize the dichotomy between both aspects. He may have come to the conclusion that some Romantics had gone too far with their mysticism, but the encounter with the Schlegels' writings had prompted him to consider a problem that would acquire the utmost significance for his entire oeuvre.

More broadly, Clausewitz's intensive exchanges with A. W. Schlegel would appear to justify the conclusion that, through Schlegel, who had been the epicentre of the Jena circle in the 1790s, Clausewitz also encountered the broader intellectual output of that circle, including the ideas of Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, and Schleiermacher—if he had not been familiar with them already.

The other social forum in which Clausewitz may have encountered key intellectual figures was the *Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft*. The constitutive meeting of the *Tischgesellschaft* took place on 18 January 1811, the

[29] Paulin, *The Life of August Wilhelm Schlegel*, 304.
[30] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 736ff.
[31] Carl to Marie, 1 September 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 147.
[32] Friedrich von Schlegel, *Dichtungen* (Munich: Schöningh, 1962), 171.

anniversary of the coronation of Frederick William III. The *Tischgesellschaft* was patriotic, anti-Napoleonic, and anti-Semitic in its orientation: its statutes explicitly excluded Jews, 'Philistines', and women.[33] Beyond this vague commitment to patriotism and the rebirth of Prussia,[34] the *Tischgesellschaft* lacked programmatic unity or, put differently, featured a plurality of opinions among its members. Adam Müller, one of its two founders, for instance, had mocked Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* in his 1808 review as being far-fetched and unrealistic as a solution to Germany's political crisis. Yet, he agreed with Fichte that the crisis had been caused by a 'lack of a spirit of unity and external cohesion', which itself had its roots in the 'unnerving power of the cold rationality of the Enlightenment' and a 'lack of energy among governments'.[35]

In spite of choosing the symbolic anniversary of Friedrich William's coronation as its founding date, the *Tischgesellschaft* was, as Müller's remarks show, far from endorsing an uncritical monarchism. On the contrary, its list of members included, in particular as far as the military was concerned, many reform-minded individuals. It was also conspicuously meritocratic and education-oriented in that it brought together individuals who had distinguished themselves in their professions rather than having been born into Prussia's privileged elite (even though both often coincided). The *Tischgesellschaft* was, in Stefan Nienhaus's words, 'simultaneously more exclusive and more open' than comparable societies in Prussia at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[36]

The *Tischgesellschaft* met fortnightly every Tuesday at three o'clock at a public house. Given that it was Clausewitz who had encouraged a number of his close friends and colleagues, some of them junior officers, to join, it seems likely that he was more than a merely peripheral member.[37] The records of the *Tischgesellschaft* show that Clausewitz did indeed take part in its debates and activities: in April 1811 Clausewitz ordered a printed copy of Achim von Arnim's *Philisterschrift*. In the spring of 1811 Clausewitz replied to Arnim's circular to all members in which the latter suggested that all meetings of the *Tischgesellschaft* during the summer months be held outside, in the *Tiergarten* (Clausewitz was against this suggestion, but was apparently overruled).[38]

[33] 'Vorschlag zu einer deutschen Tischgesellschaft, in *Texte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, ed. Stefan Nienhaus (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2008), 5.

[34] The *Tischgesellschaft*'s patriotism was largely pro-Hohenzollern and therefore pegged to Prussia's revival, even though the inclusion of Catholic Germany was conceivable to many of its members. Cf. Stefan Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft* (Berlin: Niemeyer Verlag, 2003), 8ff.

[35] Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, 100ff.

[36] Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, 23.

[37] Nienhaus, *Geschichte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, 20. Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 131, had argued that Clausewitz had remained sceptical towards the Romantics. who formed a central part of the member of the *Tischgesellschaft*.

[38] Ludwig Achim von Arnim, in Nienhaus (ed.), *Texte der deutschen Tischgesellschaft*, 36, 96.

Fichte took over as speaker of the *Tischgesellschaft* at some point in the summer of 1811, which indicates that he must have been present at all of its meetings in the second half of 1811. It is therefore highly likely that Clausewitz finally met Fichte in person in 1811, if he had not encountered him before. It is equally likely that Clausewitz met the dramatist Heinrich von Kleist in the framework of the *Tischgesellschaft*. While Clausewitz worked with his fellow reformers on plans for a Prussian people's war, Kleist drafted his drama *Die Hermannsschlacht*, in which he exhorted his fellow Prussians to engage in a total mobilization of the entire society in a popular insurrection against Napoleon. The parallels between the military reform movement and Kleist's play have been widely acknowledged.[39] Despite these parallels, and despite their almost certain personal acquaintance, Clausewitz never mentioned Kleist in his writings or letters.

Clausewitz's wife, Marie, most likely also maintained more social contacts than Clausewitz himself during the years 1810 to 1812. As a chief lady-in-waiting to Princess Charlotte, Marie had developed close connections to the Prussian court. One of her closest contacts at court was Karoline von Berg, Queen Louise's 'bosom friend' until Louise's death in 1810.[40] Karoline maintained a literary salon in Berlin. She was acquainted with Johann Gottfried Herder, Schiller, Goethe, and Jean Paul. The Clausewitzs and von Berg must have been close friends, since Clausewitz reported to Gneisenau in a letter dating from the autumn of 1811 that 'Frau v. Berg has ordered her dinner to be brought here today [to the Clausewitz residence], she already did so yesterday, we have been quite merry'.[41] This is an indication that Clausewitz was most likely also exposed to the intellectual and cultural currents and discourses of his time through his wife, Marie, and her social circles, even though these connections are more speculative than his encounter with A. W. Schlegel in Coppet and his membership of the *Tischgesellschaft*.

That Clausewitz at least knew *of* Fichte is clear from the anonymous letter he wrote to him in 1809 in response to the latter's article in *Vesta*. His knowledge of Schiller's works, both dramatic and historical, is equally documented through his letters. Furthermore, Clausewitz reported that he spent a substantial amount of time in discussion with A. W. Schlegel during his stay in Coppet. The elder Schlegel brother, whose Jena residence had been the hub of the Romantic and Idealist network in Jena in the 1790s, could have been a conduit for the ideas and theories of other members of this network, such as Novalis, Fichte, Schleiermacher. and Schelling. Apart from that, we know that Clausewitz had met Pestalozzi and appreciated his educational ideas. He was

[39] Peter Paret, 'Kleist and Clausewitz: A Comparative Sketch', *Understanding War*, ed. in Paret, 155–66; Elisabeth Krimmer, *The Representation of War in German Literature: From 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46ff.

[40] Bellinger, *Marie von Clausewitz*, 105.

[41] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, autumn 1811, in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 670.

also acquainted with Wilhelm von Humboldt. In sum, it would be implausible to assume that Clausewitz took no notice of the intellectual currents in Prussia and beyond. Rather than being himself a Romantic genius, he was surrounded by and exposed to those who debated the ideas of genius, art, science, society, and politics.

CLAUSEWITZ'S WRITINGS FROM THE REFORM YEARS

The most central of Clausewitz's texts from the reform years are the letter to Fichte from January 1809 and the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* of 1812. Other texts, such as the *Historische Briefe über die großen Kriegsereignisse im Oktober 1806* and various studies that compare the Germans and the French, are more cursory in character.[42] The texts about the Germans and the French are clearly drafts, core themes of which were, however, to find their way into the third of the confessions of the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*. His letters from the reform years, in particular those between 1810 and 1812 to Gneisenau (Carl and Marie were married in December 1810 and then lived together in Berlin until Clausewitz's departure; hence there are few letters between Carl and Marie during that time), give further insights into the relevance of the two main texts.

Clausewitz wrote his anonymous letter to Fichte on 11 January 1809. It was a response to an article entitled 'Über Machiavel als Schriftsteller' that Fichte had published in 1807 in the periodical *Vesta*. The letter was prompted, Clausewitz explained to Fichte, by the desire to disabuse Fichte of some misconceptions about modern artillery. Clausewitz presented his corrections with utmost civility and politeness. He went on to write about Machiavelli, but the lingering question that drove Clausewitz's argument was the question of 'what is to be done about Prussia's situation'. Fichte and Clausewitz faced the same problem: Prussia's fairly hopeless prospects after the Franco-Prussian treaty of Tilsit of July 1807. Clausewitz's mood after he received the news of the conclusion of the treaty is well captured in one of his letters to Marie, written in French captivity:

> I am like someone who despairs, who has lost everything forever in one moment. [...] We are so much at our enemy's mercy, so lacking inner strength and external support, that we can expect the worst to happen, and that would be in my opinion, if the French armies were to occupy the Prussian provinces.[43]

[42] Carl von Clausewitz, *Historische Briefe über die großen Kriegsereignisse im Oktober 1806*, ed. Joachim Niemeyer (Berlin: Dümmler, 1977); Carl von Clausewitz, 'Über den Nationalgeist der Franzosen', in Malmsten Schering (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, 40–6; Carl von Clausewitz, 'Die Deutschen und die Franzosen', in *Carl von Clausewitz; Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Hans Rothfels (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), 37ff.

[43] Carl to Marie, 31 July 1807, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 131.

As is well known, the treaty of Tilsit prompted Fichte to deliver his *Addresses to the German Nation*. The *Addresses* are not only an exhortation to all Germans to act as a nation. They also signified a break in Fichte's philosophy of the state, in which law and morality had been almost synonymous until 1807. Prussia's downfall had deeply shaken his thinking in that respect, as its failure had been ostensibly precipitated by a lack of communal morality and political solidarity.[44]

In 1807, Fichte and Clausewitz shared two concerns. First, a critique of a wrong-headed worship of peace. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in 1808 Clausewitz had penned an outburst against peace-loving 'philosophers who had the best intentions'. Fichte, even though he was one of the early supporters of Kant's essay *Toward Perpetual Peace*, had increasingly come to see perpetual peace as a utopian ideal and feared that putting too much hope into principled pacifism would simply give Napoleonic France more leeway to expand across Europe.[45] Secondly, both Fichte and Clausewitz despaired at the indecision of Prussia's political elites, in particular, of course, of Frederick William III. Fichte chided those intellectual currents that originated in the second half of the eighteenth century as being the 'enemy of all seriousness, of all consequence, of all enthusiasm, any big thought or decision'.[46] Between 1810 and 1811 Clausewitz repeatedly wrote to Gneisenau in code, ostensibly encrypting critical comments about the king and despairing about his wavering.[47]

Fichte's and Clausewitz's diagnosis was clear: eternal peace was a chimera for Prussia after 1807. Only *ancien régime* monarchs such as Frederick William III believed in it—in order to mask their political paralysis. This is why, for Fichte, Machiavelli had a renewed relevance: while relations *within* states had been pacified—at the least in Germany—over the past century, relations *between* states were ungoverned by either law or morality.[48] In the 1790s, Fichte had been an open admirer of the French Revolution, but he was horrified by the arrival of Napoleon, who was, in Fichte's eyes, a post-revolutionary mirror image of general princely decadence and political corruption throughout Europe. While Fichte never completely turned away

[44] Stefan Reiß, *Fichtes Reden an die deutsche Nation oder: 'Vom Ich zum Wir'* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 12.

[45] Johann Gottlieb Fichte: '"Rezension" zu Kants Schrift *Zum ewigen Frieden*', in *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Werke*, vol. I 3, ed. Rainer Lauth und Hans Jacob (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1966), 219ff; Fichte, 'Über Machiavel als Schriftsteller, und Stellen aus seinen Schriften', in *Gesamtausgabe: Werke*, vol. I 9, *1806–1807*, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Gliwitzky (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromman Holzbog, 1995), 233ff.

[46] Fichte, 'Über Machiavel als Schriftsteller', 240.

[47] On 29 January 1811, Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau in code, decrypted by Gneisenau upon receipt: 'Between the two of us: [I] don't [think] that the king will go against [the French], partly as a matter of choice, but partly as a result of a lack decisiveness' (in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Studien—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 639.

[48] Fichte, 'Über Machiavel als Schriftsteller', 241.

from his more revolutionary ideas of the 1790s, he thought that the realization of a higher form of liberty for all human beings had to be postponed. Confronted with the question of how to affect social transformation and liberation without a descent into anarchy and demagoguery, Fichte intermittently favoured an 'educational dictatorship' to bridge the gap between the comprehensive decadence of his times and the creation of a better future. The state had to educate the nation to overcome egoism and to develop a communal morality.[49]

Peter Paret interpreted Clausewitz's letter to Fichte as proof of how deep Machiavelli's influence on Clausewitz was. And, indeed, in a note or draft that according to Rothfels dated from 1805, Clausewitz wrote:

> No book is more necessary for the politician/policymaker than Machiavel; those who affect abhorrence towards his principles are a kind of humanist *Petit-maîtres*. What he says about the relationship between the prince and his subjects is of course dated, since the situation of states has changed considerably since his time, and yet, it contains some wonderful rules which will endure forever. [...] But this author is exceptionally educational regarding the *Politik* of external relations [...][50]

According to Paret, Clausewitz's letter to Fichte echoed this assessment, which Paret argued foreshadowed Clausewitz's post-1815 embrace of realpolitik: 'In the history of Clausewitz's thought, his letter to Fichte, while not documenting a shift in a new direction, does point to some sources of the ideas that gradually moved Clausewitz away from the great majority of writers on war of his generation, and enables us to see the early phases of this process more clearly.'[51] Yet, in his letter to Fichte, Clausewitz expressed some hesitation as to whether Machiavelli's book about the *Art of War* was a book that he would recommend. Machiavelli's fault, according to Clausewitz, was that he 'was too attracted not only by the *spirit*, but also by the *forms* of the ancient art of war'.[52] In other words, Clausewitz criticized Fichte for having allowed himself to be led down a path by Machiavelli that placed too much faith in political regulation and the ability of the state to form and educate a nation. Forms, for Clausewitz, were paralysing the spirit; they were 'dead forms'.[53] It was the spirit that needed revitalizing, not the forms of war. Bellicose nations, such as the Swiss and the French during the revolutionary wars, reflected the spirit of the art of war rather than the forms. And the 'spirit' of the nation did not

[49] Daniel Moggach, 'Fichte's Engagement with Machiavelli', *History of Political Thought*, 16/4 (1993), 589.

[50] Clausewitz, quoted in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 209ff.

[51] Paret, 'Machiavelli, Fichte, and Clausewitz', 90.

[52] Clausewitz, 'Letter to Fichte', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, ed. Malmsten Schering, 70; emphasis added.

[53] Clausewitz, 'Letter to Fichte', 73.

emanate from the state, it emanated from the individual.[54] As a result, the political decadence of Fichte's and Clausewitz's times was to be overcome at the individual level. The individual had to be transformed in order to be able to create a nation—the nation could not be created from above, through 'dead forms'. What was needed was *Tugend*, virtue, and the individual could acquire virtue through the experience of fighting. In fact, by deciding to take up arms in order to liberate the state in 'the most beautiful of wars',[55] the individual at once liberated her- or himself from domination and egotism, and created the nation. The letter ends with a passage that is reminiscent of sections from Novalis's *Glauben und Liebe*:

> I confess that I hold the superiority of this form of war in high regard, in which warrior-like virtue invigorates the whole army in its smallest parts and in which the main effort of the art [of war] consists in the most perfect use of this warrior virtue, and that I think that it [this form of war] would be able to overcome any other art of war, however much the latter were a perfect product of reason, not to mention that [the art of war that relies on warrior virtue] would come closest to the most perfect form.[56]

The spirit, or virtue, created and perfected the form, not the other way around, as Fichte would have it in his Machiavelli essay. Warrior-like virtue is a remedy for social decadence that sprang from the individual and turned a plurality of individuals into a community. The chief ill of their times—here Fichte and Clausewitz were in agreement—was egotism. The best expression of this diagnosis of egotism as the root of all social ills can be found in Novalis's *Glauben und Liebe*:

> The old famous system is based on the principle that the state ought to intregrate everyone on the basis of their self-interest. Wise politicians were guided by the ideal of a state in which the self-interest of the state is just as egoistic as that of its subject; however, both are artificially interwoven so as to further each other.
>
> Much effort has been spent on this political squaring of the circle: but unrefined egotism seems to be infinite, anti-systematic. It did not allow itself to be limited, even though this would be necessary according to the nature of any state institution. But the formal adoption of common egotism as a principle has caused tremendous damage, and the nucleus of the revolution of our days is to be found nowhere but there.[57]

For Novalis, it was (at least in 1798) the symbolic figure of the king and his 'educational' character and role that lifted the people to higher moral grounds.

[54] Clausewitz, 'Letter to Fichte', 73.
[55] Clausewitz, 'Letter to Fichte', 72.
[56] Clausewitz, 'Letter to Fichte', 73ff.
[57] Novalis, 'Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin', in *Schriften*, ii, *Das philosophische Werk I*, ed. Richard Samuel, Hans Joachim Mähl, and Gerhard Schulz (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982), 582–9, at 592.

The people and the king were 'inseparable, like body and soul'. Of course, Novalis interjected, for the monarchy to rise to this height of organic unity, it would have to become a republican monarchy.[58] But the republic needed the king just as much as the other way around: without him it would turn into an empty and possibly divisive spectacle of democratic decision-making that could not overcome individual egotism.

In his letter to Fichte, Clausewitz engaged an argument that was very similar to that of Novalis in *Glauben und Liebe*. But, by 1809, Clausewitz could no longer place his trust in the person of the king as the great educator and unifier of the people (Novalis had died in 1801, so he did not witness the events of 1806 and after). He replaced the king as the source of public virtue with the activity of war and the idea of personal sacrifice: in a letter to Marie from 23 April 1809 (three months after he had written the letter to Fichte), Clausewitz announced that he was considering leaving Prussian service in order to fight for the liberation of Prussia. He told Marie that he would sooner or later exchange the 'pen for the sword and [would] spring to arms at the altar of the fatherland, happily to spill my blood'. He had only contempt for those who hesitated to follow the call of duty, ostensibly for reasons of 'loyalty to the king' and 'patriotism', but actually they were motivated only by the desire to keep their positions and their income. Such a perspective was, for Clausewitz, 'a barometer of the egotism that engulfs people here, smothering the thought, the sentiment, the intuition of a mighty call to a magnanimous effort, emanating from the example of other noble peoples and from the danger in which we find ourselves'.[59]

Viewed from this perspective, Clausewitz's letter to Fichte reads like a subtle critique of Fichte's turn towards an 'educational dictatorship', the imposition of morality by the state. The polite tone of Clausewitz's letter borders on subservience, but this should not be mistaken for agreement. In Clausewitz's eyes, Fichte had strayed from the reform path and endorsed state repression at a time when it was least helpful. By giving the state formative power over the education of its citizens, Fichte risked, in Clausewitz's eyes, further suppression of the individual into machine-like structures, hence making the emancipation of the individual—which was key to Prussia's liberation—even more difficult. Clausewitz wrote his letter to Fichte at the same time as he was working with Scharnhorst and Gneisenau on plans for a popular insurrection against Napoleon. On 6 January 1809, five days before he wrote his letter to Fichte, he expressed his full confidence in people's war in a letter to Gneisenau regarding the events in the Peninsular War: 'One has to be a bad philistine if one were to lose courage yet. So far my military

[58] Novalis, 'Glauben und Liebe', 593.
[59] Carl to Marie, 23 April 1809, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 226.

convictions are firm regarding the Spanish affairs.'[60] The notion of 'the most beautiful of wars', a defensive people's war, motivated by altruistic sacrifice, was the only option for Prussia's rebirth. Even if Clausewitz preferred to stay anonymous as the author of this letter, he made an effort to ensure that its recipient, Fichte, noticed that the letter was written by someone who was highly educated and au fait with the political and philosophical discourses of his times.

The letter to Fichte touches upon many themes that were to recur in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* of 1812. The most obvious indication of a high degree of continuity between the two documents is probably the last paragraph of the letter to Fichte, which Clausewitz solemnly begins with the words 'I confess . . . ', which would became his signature approach in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*. It was the Prussian–French treaty of alliance of February 1812 that prompted Clausewitz to write the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*. The explicit intention of the text is to serve as an explanation of the efforts of the military reformers and as a justification of their decision to leave Prussian service. In that sense the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is the last in a line of memoranda on the desirability of a popular insurrection against Napoleonic domination that the reformers produced between 1808 and 1812.[61] For Clausewitz personally the text is also a summation of a long-simmering process of alienation from the politics of Prussia's elites. Three years earlier, Carl had written to Marie 'that it is impossible for me to fight against my country', but that had become almost inevitable with the conclusion of the alliance treaty between France and Prussia in 1812. For Clausewitz, it was equally impossible 'to remain an idle spectator'.[62] That left only the option of taking up arms against France by joining one of France's enemies—Russia. In the note that Clausewitz sent to Gneisenau along with the text of the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, the former urged the latter to keep the copy of the text safe and to make sure that it was not released before the reformers had left Prussia.[63]

The *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is divided into three individual 'confessions' and one appendix. The first confession recapitulates the sequence of events that led

[60] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 6 January 1809, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Schriften—Studien—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 616.

[61] August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, *Denkschriften zum Volksaufstand von 1808 und 1811*, ed. Harald von Koenigswald (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1936); Gerhard von Scharnhorst, *Private und dienstliche Schriften*, v, ed. Johannes Kunisch and Michael Sikora (Hamburg: Böhlau, 2009), 434. Gneisenau's 1811 memorandum on the *Landsturm*, which he and Scharnhorst jointly submitted to the Prussian chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg, served as the template for the 1813 *Landsturmedikt*. In the *Landsturmedikt*, the Prussian king sanctioned the organization of a popular insurrection against the Napoleonic forces. However, the edict was never implemented and was weakened to the point of suspension by a revision of 17 July 1813.

[62] Carl to Marie, 23 April 1809, in Linnebach (ed.), *Karl und Marie von Clausewitz*, 224.

[63] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, February 1812, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, i. 682.

to Prussia's situation in 1812. At the root of Prussia's historic low point, its forced alliance with France, were, according to Clausewitz, moral ills: 'the sinful abandon of all duties towards the common good' and the 'unashamed sacrifice of all honour of the state and the people, all personal and human dignity'.[64] He went on:

> I believe and I confess that a people should not deem anything higher than the dignity and freedom of its existence.
>
> That it ought to defend it to the last drop of blood.
>
> That there is no more sacred duty for it to fulfil, no higher law to obey.
>
> That the moral stain of cowardly submission can never be removed.
>
> That this venom in the blood of a people will be passed on to its offspring and will paralyse and undermine the strength of later descendants.
>
> That the honour of the king and the government is one with the honour of its people and that it is the only palladium of the latter's well-being.
>
> That a people is insurmountable in its magnanimous fight for its freedom.
>
> That even the downfall of this freedom as a result of a bloody and honourable fight secures the rebirth of the people and is the nucleus of life from which a new tree once grows secure roots.[65]

In the first confession, Clausewitz noted in the introduction to the second confession, he had expressed himself 'in the language of passion'. The second confession, Clausewitz announced, had to be written in the language of 'calm reasoning'.[66] He proceeded to give an even-headed analysis of Prussia's situation. Clausewitz's diagnosis, in keeping with the perspective of many of his reform-minded contemporaries, was that decadence was at the root of Prussia's unprecedented crisis. Decadence was intertwined with French domination—if Prussia was not resilient before it became the target of French expansionism, Napoleonic domination after 1806 sucked the last of the lifeblood out of its economy and society. Both decadence and liberation from the yoke of Napoleon could be overcome only by war. It should be clear to every reasonable person, Clausewitz explained, that the Prussian alliance with Napoleon was against the interest of the Prussian people. Alas, reason had not convinced Prussia's leadership to reject it:

> In fact, it could not have been sensible reasoning that resulted in the opinion and the mood of the people; it was fear of the coming ill and a short-sighted self-interest.
>
> One is scared of danger, of the sacrifices that one is to make, and in particular of the improbability of success, of which one has a clear conviction, and so one thinks to act wisely in avoiding these dangers.[67]

[64] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 688.
[65] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 688ff.
[66] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 690.
[67] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 706.

Unbridled reason, in other words, bred egotism. Clausewitz's remedy to this malady is clear:

> Reason alone is supposed to decide, everyone says. As if fear were not an expression of the *Gemüth* [mind/emotion], as if it would allow for a free judgement of reason. All that one can admit is that both confessions, that in favour of resistance and that in favour of subservience, spring equally from the *Gemüth*, but the former is motivated by courage, whereas the latter is rooted in fear. Fear paralyses the mind, courage vitalizes it.[68]

Reason was not necessarily geared towards the common good—and it was open to misuse for the purpose of rationalizing the basest emotions. In contrast, passion in the form of courage fostered action.

In the third confession, Clausewitz proved himself as the pragmatist and military planner that he also was. He presented France as proof that Prussia's rebirth was possible: France had recovered from the bankruptcy and political turmoil of the revolution by introducing conscription. This institution was at the heart of France's renewed power and domination of Europe.[69] Clausewitz showed himself convinced of Prussia's potential for renewal, but, in order to achieve it, it had to tap into all of its people's resource—in a meritocratic way:

> By the way, it is pure rehashing, a mere common-sense judgement to pretend that among the five million people there was not sufficient esprit to be able to recruit exceptional people for exceptional purposes. If only the government were to decide to draw upon these people, they exist in even the smallest of peoples, since hundreds usually vanish in the dust until one [individual] overcomes the difficulties with which the social conditions confront him and moves upwards.[70]

As in his lectures on small war, Clausewitz cited the Vendée, Tyrol, and Spain as examples of successful popular insurrections upon which the Prussian *Landsturm* could be built. The task of the *Landsturm* was to raise troops in those parts of the country that had not yet been formally occupied. The *Landsturm* was intended to undermine the collection of contributions on the part of the enemy and to eliminate enemy detachments. The *Landsturm* could even act against Prussia's own government should the latter remain allied with France, in that it could be used to 'secure the resources, in particular men and horses, which our own government could wish to extract from the country'.[71]

There is no 'mathematical accuracy' to the success of the *Landsturm*, but demanding a high probability of the success of the *Landsturm* was anyway misguided.[72] As Clausewitz had emphasized at length in the first confession,

[68] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 707.
[69] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 711.
[70] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 714.
[71] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 722.
[72] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 724.

the success of the *Landsturm* is guaranteed, be it in the form of a liberation of Prussia or in the shape of an honourable all-out resistance that ends in defeat. The *Landsturm*, in spite of its makeshift nature, could become a decisive force in a war against France:

> Who can reasonably claim that the insurgent would not prevail over the enemy troops at one of the many locations, led by some bellicose individual, enlivened by chance, spurred on by revenge. Then larger conundrums develop from individual mishaps, and the insurgent army could play the lead in the blink of an eye. Then the momentum of victory and events rolls back against the enemy; it no longer depends on individual instances of chance or fate, on the dubious fortunes of battle. A great and common cause prevails, and the skill, the strength, and the greatness of the individual man shatters like a small skiff in the waves of the furious sea.[73]

In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* Clausewitz briefly pondered the role of the state in the instigation of an insurrection, along the lines of an 'educational dictatorship' that Fichte had advocated in his *Vesta* article. In contrast to his letter to Fichte, Clausewitz was more open-minded to such an option in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, presumably because he may have wished to appeal to a broader audience and unify different stances on Prussia's reform and rebirth: 'Why would the government not exert its power on the nation in this regard? Why would it not force the people to act in such a way and to exist in such a way as the government thinks is prudent? [...] There is a form of coercion, even terrible coercion, that is not tyranny.'[74] Yet, in the subsequent paragraph, Clausewitz's optimism about the moral potential of his fellow countrymen reasserted itself. After all, it was still the individual, not the state, that was the source of virtue: 'There is so much truth in the fact that when man decides to confront terrible crises with extraordinary means and all his powers, these crises will lift him above himself and will enliven the powers *des Gemüths* [mind/emotion] and *des Verstandes* [reason] to an extent that he himself had not imagined to be possible. [...] Everything can become great in men as a result of the circumstances.'[75]

Finally, Clausewitz pondered the possibility that arming the people could lead to a revolution—a common conservative argument against the creation of a *Landsturm*. Clausewitz's reply to this argument was twofold: first, he posited that, if the Prussian king stayed at the helm of a popular insurrection, it would not descend into anarchy and revolution. Secondly, according to Clausewitz, people's war was already a reality, introduced by revolutionary France. Prussia had simply no choice but to go with the times: 'People's war is a reality; if you

[73] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 733.
[74] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 738.
[75] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 739.

are cursing its malignant effects, then curse those who have forced it upon us. If you appoint yourselves as judge of human actions, do not condemn the suppressed just because he is weak; rather, be just and curse him who has made this ill necessary.'[76]

The appendix of the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is devoted to more organizational detail regarding the popular insurrection advocated by the military reformers. Once again, Clausewitz harkened back to the distinction between strategy and tactics, as he had already done in the *Strategie* text in 1804 and in his lectures on small wars. However, in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* he distinguished for the first time between the tactical and the strategic defensive. Clausewitz defined the strategic defensive as a 'defence in depth', in which the opponent's occupying forces are to be harassed by small, tactically offensive actions. Clausewitz intention is clear: he has to prove once more to the detractors of people's war that the latter can have a strategic effect owing to the greater loyalty and solidarity that a people's war was likely to engender among the local population: 'The support of the locality is much more decisive in situations of strategic defence than in situations of tactical defence, greater in the theatre of war than in the position.'[77] Clausewitz ended the appendix with a lengthy overview of how war had changed during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Just as in his lectures on small wars his argument is that small-war tactics had become more important as a result of the changes in the practice of warfare. In contrast to the lectures, however, Clausewitz attributed these changes more openly to the nationalization of war:

> Even if there may once again be centuries in which none of the peoples is forced to resort to the last desperate measure of a national insurrection, in this century war is perceived as a national thing [*eine Nationalsache*] and will be waged in this spirit, according to the degrees of effort that depend upon the strength of national character and government.[78]

The appendix illustrates that there is a great degree of continuity between the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* and the lectures on small war. They are bound together by the historical narrative that Clausewitz developed in order to justify his advocacy of small-war tactics and people's war. This is not surprising, as both documents evolved in tandem, between 1810 and 1812. At the same time, the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* places Clausewitz's engagement with small war in a far broader political and philosophical context, which is the subject of the next section.

[76] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 741.
[77] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 744.
[78] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 750.

CLAUSEWITZ'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ROMANTICS, IDEALISTS, AND HUMANISTS

This section will evaluate Clausewitz's texts from the reform years with a view to the extent to which he engaged with themes stemming from his intellectual context. Three aspects are particularly relevant: first, the dichotomy of reason and passion and the anti-mechanistic theme that Clausewitz shared with the Romantics; secondly, the role of probability, luck, and chance; and, thirdly, the existential quality of war. The latter is the central aspect of Clausewitz's writings from the reform years. It has often been interpreted as the core theme that sets apart the early writings from the mature oeuvre, largely owing to the weight that many of Clausewitz's readers gave to the instrumental quality of war in *On War*. Against this background it is of particular importance to consider the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* and the specific way in which it approaches the relationship between reason and passion and the indications that it gives us regarding the role of the people in *Politik* and war.

The Dichotomy of Reason and Passion

The relationship between reason and passion and the anti-mechanistic impetus in which Clausewitz's plea for harmony between both aspects of human nature is rooted is the gist of the letter to Fichte. Clausewitz's main charge against Fichte in his letter is that the 'educational dictatorship' that Fichte advocated in his *Vesta* article would lead down the path of authoritative coercion by the state. This would necessarily suppress the individuality of each member of the population. Yet, according to Clausewitz, individuality—rather than coercion—was the source of communal virtue and hence of the renewal of the political community. Coercion, on the other hand, led to alienation. The shorthand for this alienation for Clausewitz and a number of his contemporaries was the machine metaphor. It was prominent in Novalis's *Glauben und Liebe* fragment, in which the latter attributed Prussia's decadence to the fact that it had been run 'like a factory'.

A number of the Romantics had reacted in this fashion to the legacy of approaches such as the one suggested by Julien Offray de la Mettrie in his 1747 essay entitled *L'Homme machine*. In this essay, la Mettrie imagined the human body as some kind of mechanical clockwork and the soul as its—equally mechanic—extension. Friedrich Schiller, in particular, had taken issue with la Mettrie's Cartesian mechanism in his 1793 essay on *Anmut und Würde* (*Grace and Dignity*). In this essay, Schiller re-examined the dualism of individual freedom and the necessity of obeying the moral law that had emerged from Kant's first two *Critiques*. His solution to overcome this dualism was

virtue, even though he did not suggest an ethics of virtue in and of itself.[79] In *Grace and Dignity*, Schiller attempted to arrive at a de-mechanization of moral behaviour, hence tilting the balance of the Kantian dualism heavily towards freedom. Schiller argued that if an individual acts morally, if he or she fulfils his or her moral duty out of *inclination* rather than rationality, he or she possesses a 'beautiful soul'.[80] A beautiful soul epitomized, in Schiller's eyes, harmony between passion and reason. The notion of the 'beautiful soul' had its roots in the German pietistic tradition, and it was widely used in counter-Enlightenment circles—so much so that Goethe had ridiculed it in his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[81] For Schiller it was a symbol of the unity of the individual and all his or her faculties.

In his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* Schiller broadened his aesthetic analysis of morality towards more explicitly political themes. Schiller, writing under the impression of the revolutionary Terror in France, argued that the source of decadence and depravity in his time was rooted in the fact that the 'dynamic state' treated its citizens as mere physical beings who joined society purely for motivations of self-interest or physical need. The 'ethical state' treated its citizens as rational beings, fulfilling the universal law out of duty. What was needed, according to Schiller, was a new kind of state that treated—in fact, constituted—its citizens as individual human beings in their entirety. It had to integrate both the emotional and the rational aspects of their being, thereby transcending them both and lifting humanity to a higher moral state. The term Schiller used for this political utopia was the 'aesthetic state'.

According to Frederick Beiser, Schiller's 'aesthetic state' is best understood in the framework of the republican tradition.[82] By introducing the 'aesthetic state' as a moral and political ideal, Schiller deviated from Kant:

> in the early 1790s Schiller gradually developed a conception of freedom that, in fundamental respects, is a reaction against Kant's. Essentially, he supplemented the Kantian conception of freedom as *moral autonomy* with a conception of freedom as *aesthetic self-determination*. According to the Kantian conception, freedom consists in the independence of our *rational* nature, in willing and acting according to the laws of morality, which are determined by pure reason alone. According to Schiller's conception, however, freedom consists in acting according to our *whole* nature, in the *harmony* of reason and sensibility.

[79] Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 82.

[80] Friedrich Schiller, 'Anmut und Würde', in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, xx, ed. Benno von Wiese (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1962), 287.

[81] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ix, ed. Wilhelm Voßkamp and Herbert Jaumann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 335–456.

[82] Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 163.

Schiller's solution as regards the Kantian dilemma between the universal law of reason and individual moral autonomy was the one that had the greatest impact on Romantic and Idealistic discourses in Germany around 1800. Schiller had liberated the individual from the domination of reason, by integrating the individual's sensual parts into an organic conception of humanity and society.[83]

This is a thought that must have appealed to Clausewitz. Even though we have no indication that Clausewitz had read either *Grace and Dignity* or the *Aesthetic Letters*, we know that he was familiar with Schiller's plays and had read his history of the Thirty Years War. Given that many members of his social circles beyond the military reform movement had been personally acquainted with both Schiller and Goethe, it is highly likely that Clausewitz had at least *heard of* Schiller's aesthetic analysis of morality and freedom. This would certainly chime with Clausewitz's use of the phrase 'the most beautiful of wars', defined as a war of liberation that a people wages against an intruder on its own territory, as he introduced it in his letter to Fichte. His juxtaposition of reason and sensuality/emotion [*Gemüth*] in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is even more striking in this respect. Clausewitz literally built the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* on the dialectic between passion and reason: in the first confession, Clausewitz let passion speak, whereas, in the second, he vowed to use the language of reason.[84] Yet, the reader who seeks a transformation of the dialectic in the third confession will be disappointed to find none at first sight. The third confession starts with the sober enumeration of 'the resources of the Prussian state'.[85] But, on closer inspection, the transformation—the 'sublation' to use the idealistic term—follows later in the third confession: 'Finally we will turn to the *Landwehr* or *Landsturm*.' The *Landwehr* is a 'supplement to the army and a defensive militia for remote areas of the theatre of war'. The *Landsturm* is the 'general arming of an entire people for the purpose of the defence of a country'.[86] These plans are interwoven with a new appreciation of 'moral factors', the principal gist of which is the need to harness the patriotism of the people to the defensive effort. This, of course, can be realized only if one stops 'treating human beings like machines' and instead makes an effort to 'affect their heart [*Herz*] and head [*Kopf*]'.[87] It is wrong, Clausewitz wrote in the appendix to the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, to latch on to a Frederician military system under the conditions of nationalized war. Those who hanker for eighteenth-century manoeuvring-style warfare overlook the resources that Prussia has at its hands because they believe that 'one cannot wage war if one hasn't gathered 100,000 artificially drilled people in one spot'.[88]

[83] Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 215ff.
[84] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 690.
[85] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 708.
[86] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 720.
[87] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 747ff.
[88] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 750.

Clausewitz's intention in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is twofold: to exhort his fellow Prussians to join the defence of their country, and to prove that a popular insurrection against the Napoleonic forces can succeed. Such an endeavour would occur in the form of a strategic defensive situation, which was the only framework in which people's war could succeed. Victory hinged on the destruction of the opponent's armed forces, and that was more likely to happen in a defensive situation. The detractors of the military reform efforts were wrong in clinging onto the idea that only the offensive could yield decisive results. For Clausewitz, this argument hinged on the assumption that the moral forces that constitute themselves among the people in the situation of a strategic defensive could be harnessed into the war effort: 'the disadvantage of the defensive is a political one, not a military one,' he wrote.[89] In other words, the form of governance in Prussia actively suppressed the germination of these moral forces by treating its subjects as 'machines'.

Liberation for Clausewitz hence had to happen at two levels: first, obviously, the institution of the *Landsturm* was intended to liberate Prussia from the yoke of Napoleonic domination. Secondly, that also meant liberating the Prussian people—all of them—from a style of governance that was mechanistic, fostered egotism and societal division, and did not enable human beings to flourish in a harmony of reason and passion, 'Herz und Kopf'. Drill and 'dead forms' were anathema to Clausewitz's vision, as he made abundantly clear in his letter to Fichte. Prussia's rebirth had to begin with the unification of the individual as an organic whole comprising both sensual and intellectual aspects. The state could engender this process by governing in a less repressive way, but it could not forcibly educate its subjects into a moral community, as Fichte had suggested in his *Vesta* article. Like Schiller, Clausewitz heavily tilted the scales of freedom and the moral law in favour of the former. And, as for Schiller, the harmonization of all human faculties were for Clausewitz the *sine qua non* for realizing freedom without sinking into anarchy.

As we shall see in Chapter 5, in *On War*, the dichotomy between reason and passion morphed into a trinity that included war as 'a play of chance and probability, which turns it into a free play of the soul'. The harmonization of reason and passion in *On War* is hence less politically emphatic than in Clausewitz's reform writings. In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* the unification of reason and passion is achieved in the process of a transformation of all individuals into a nation. In *On War*, the 'free play of the soul' mitigates between the two poles. It is to a certain extent interwoven with the concept of 'military genius'. It is the messy and non-linear character of war that makes this 'free play of the soul' necessary. As we shall see in the next section, already in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* Clausewitz devoted his attention to the notions of

[89] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 747.

probability, luck, and chance in war. However, in the writings from the reform years, these were negative concepts: probability was the excuse for cold-blooded technocrats and the sceptics to stay inactive. In *On War*, the notions of play, probability, and chance were to lose these negative political connotations, which illustrates that, even though Clausewitz's intellectual development was not always a continuous one, he tended to return to concepts in which he had engaged in his formative years in Berlin.

Probability, Luck, and Chance

In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* Clausewitz chided the sceptics and doom-mongers of a Prussian liberation from Napoleon by ridiculing the way in which they latched onto calculations of probability. 'How can one demand the probability of a fortunate success?' he asked.[90] He went on to claim that 'probability calculations' took into account only 'physical advantages'.[91] Cold-blooded calculation of probability is the hallmark of the philistines: 'No sooner are they content than one proves to them with mathematical certainty that the destruction of the enemy army is possible.'[92] This was the mindset that was responsible for Prussia's ruin.

While Clausewitz's view of the mathematics of probability in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* is negatively tainted—in line with his contempt for the geometric excesses of Enlightenment strategic theory and his anti-mechanistic politics—it also reflects that he was au fait with the mathematical and logical theories of his time. He had studied logic and mathematics with Kiesewetter at the Berlin *Kriegsschule* and had deepened his knowledge through private study. The study of probability had been a vital concern of the Enlightenment. The idea of being able to establish a 'geometric chance' held the promise of expanding the boundaries of knowledge by detecting patterns in phenomena that seemingly did not follow any law of nature. Hence the development of a logic of probability also promised to 'link reason and empirical perceptions', by bringing the former into line with the latter.[93] Before his critical turn, Kant himself had pondered the notion of probability but dropped it with his pivot to a critical philosophy. He insisted that there was a difference between mathematical probability and philosophical probability. Only mathematical probability could yield valid judgements in so far as the factors influencing a particular phenomenon could be quantified (such as the chance of rolling the

[90] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 707.
[91] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 718.
[92] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 724.
[93] Luigi Cataldi Madonna, 'Kant und der Probabilismus der Aufklärung', *Aufklärung*, 7/1 (1992), 29ff.

sum of eight with two dice). Philosophy, unlike mathematics, dealt with analytical judgements. According to Kant, the notion of *Wahrscheinlichkeit* (probability) was misplaced in a philosophical context. What counted was *Scheinbarkeit* (the appearance of truth).[94]

Kant dropped the notion of a *logica probabilium* as a desideratum for the discipline of philosophy when he turned to criticism, partly in a bid to shield philosophy from the encroachment of mathematical concepts and methods. In the framework of German Idealism, probability played a scant role. For Fichte, probability was a defective 'not-quite' form of truth that could establish only negative proof.[95] Clausewitz dismissed the notion of probability in a similar fashion: just because success was uncertain did not mean that one ought not to take action. Possibly, he had come across Friedrich Schlegel's 1798 *Athenaeum* fragment 25, in which the latter had written: 'Everything great, good, and beautiful is improbable, because it is exceptional, and at least suspicious.'[96]

The Existential Character of War

In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, Clausewitz railed against those who discarded the option of a popular insurrection against Napoleon because they calculated that its chances of success were slim. As so often, Clausewitz's own position is ambivalent. On the one hand, with his military planner hat on, he meticulously calculates and enumerates Prussia's resources in order to prove that resistance is feasible. On the other hand, and no doubt more importantly, the success of people's war lies in the emancipation of the individual, which was the only path to Prussia's rebirth, even if a popular insurrection did not immediately lead to liberation from French dominion. Clausewitz could not have been any clearer on this when he wrote that even the 'downfall after a bloody and honourable fight' would secure the rebirth of the people in the future.[97] People's war could not but succeed, because the emancipation of the individual had to—and inevitably would—precede the liberation of the nation.

Fichte, who in 1813 turned back to a more freedom-oriented understanding of war and politics, expressed the indivisibility of freedom in his 1813 *Lectures on the Concept of True War*. 'No peace, no settlement, least from the individual. The object of contention cannot be divided: either there is freedom, or there is none. There is a limit to all coercion and violence, and the limit is

[94] Cataldi Madonna, 'Kant und der Probabilismus', 33.
[95] Allen W. Wood, *Fichte's Ethical Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.
[96] Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ii, ed. Hans Eichner (Munich: Schöningh, 1967), 343.
[97] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 689.

death, and who can coerce the one who is able to die?'[98] Fichte distinguished between *Fürstenkriege* (princes' wars), which are fought for property and thus motivated by egotism, and *Volkskriege* (people's wars), which are fought for liberty. They were 'wahrhaftige Kriege' (true wars).[99]

For both Clausewitz and Fichte, people's war is a political ideal. The question is how this moral judgement comes to terms with the problem of violence in this form of war. People's war is an existential form of war inasmuch as it is fought for the existence of a people—both in the sense of their survival and in the sense of their constitution as a political community. It has a tendency towards an escalation of violence. In Fichte's perspective as it is reflected in his *Lectures on the Concept of True War* there can be no compromise, no settlement: freedom is unconditional and indivisible. In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, Clausewitz considered the dangers of an escalation of violence at length. He was aware of the real risk of a descent into anarchy and terror. But he countered that people's war as nationalized war had already become a fact in post-revolutionary Europe.[100] Moreover, given that the Prussian *Landsturm* was to fight under the authority of the Prussian Crown, the latter would be able to use reprisals in order to bring the opponent back within the limits of the customs of war.[101]

This does not mean that Clausewitz underestimated the dangers of a general people's war in Europe. He argued that a people's war that descended into a generalized civil war was a much scarier prospect than a unified uprising against expansionist France, but a generalized civil war was likely to occur only if Napoleon was not stopped in his tracks in 1812. If Napoleon were allowed to carry on with his expansionist designs, what would inevitably follow was some kind of imperial overstretch along the lines of the downfall of the Roman Empire. Civil war would emerge from the power vacuum left behind by imperial overstretch:

> Does not everybody have to admit that this crisis [the one following a French imperial overstretch] would be much more terrifying than the present one; this fight of divided forces against a tenfold foe much more horrifying than the fight of all forces, bound together by duty, revenge, hatred, self-interest, against one foe that all have in common?[102]

[98] Quoted in Herfried Münkler, *Über den Krieg: Stationen der Kriegsgeschichte im Spiegelbild ihrer theoretischen Reflexion* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2002), 73; cf. Andreas Herberg-Rothe, 'The State and the Existential View of War', in *Clausewitz: The State and War*, ed. Andreas Herberg-Rothe, Jan Willem Honig, and Daniel Moran (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 71–86.

[99] Quoted in Münkler, *Über den Krieg*, 63.

[100] 'Der Volkskrieg ist da [...]' (Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 741).

[101] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 734.

[102] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 705ff.

Clausewitz used the notion of *Partheienfehde* (partisan feud) to refer to the scenario of a generalized civil war in Europe. In this context, the notion of *Partei* for the first time in Clausewitz's writings occurred as a shorthand for political divisiveness and anarchy. In the lectures on small wars, the notion of *Partei* had always referred to small infantry and cavalry detachments. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the term *Parteien* in its more negative, party politics-oriented meaning would become increasingly central in Clausewitz's post-1815 political writings. Partisan feuds and partisan politics sprang from a situation in which the liberation of the individual did not immediately translate into the constitution of a political community.

This leaves the central question of how the existential understanding of war, which is prevalent in Clausewitz's writings from the reform years, relates to his magnum opus, *On War*. Many Clausewitz scholars, most importantly Peter Paret, have argued that Clausewitz's politics shifted fundamentally over his lifetime. While Clausewitz clung to a sentimental and naive patriotism and identification with the Prussian state during the reform years, the mature Clausewitz evolved into a Machiavellian realist.[103] Alternatively, Andreas Herberg-Rothe argued, Clausewitz realized that, with the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), war had turned back into an instrument of state *Politik* and there was little need or room for people's war in the future.[104] Yet, on closer inspection, the existential and the instrumental conceptions of war are complementary and not theoretically mutually exclusive. First, people's war still formed a part of *On War*, in book VI, Chapter 26. That chapter rehearsed many of the themes that Clausewitz had developed both in his lectures on small war and in his reform writings. Secondly, and more importantly, existential war had always borne a strong relationship with *Politik*. People's war was supremely political as it unified a national community. Both war in its existential form and war in its instrumental form were means to a political end. However, war in its instrumental form was used by policymakers, whereas war in its existential form was the preferred instrument of revolutionaries:

> The difference between the two conceptions of war lies in the question of the identity of the subjects who wage war: while the submission of war to *Politik* in the case of the instrumental conception of war means that the subject itself is not supposed to change as a result of the war, the existential conception of war counts on such processes of transformation and constitution, which war precipitates and accelerates. It is consciously accepted that war and violence intermittently themselves play the role of the subject.[105]

[103] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 437.
[104] Herberg-Rothe, 'The State and the Existential View of War', 86.
[105] Münkler, *Über den Krieg*, 115.

If there is no radical incompatibility between Clausewitz's reform writings and his mature oeuvre, if, in other words, existential and instrumental wars are part of the same theoretical construct, that means that Clausewitz was never the apologist of an instrumental conception of war that generations of Clausewitz scholars have argued. His core question, throughout his life, was how war and *Politik* related to one another, and his answer was that this relationship could be manifold.

CONCLUSIONS

The main insight that an analysis of Clausewitz's reform writings has generated is that Clausewitz formulated his position on the institution of the *Landwehr* and the *Landsturm* on the basis of an engagement with the political and philosophical discourses of his time. His justification of people's war goes far beyond delivering the proof that it was feasible: he argued that it was politically and morally beneficial or, rather, constitutive. Clausewitz's central political problem was broadly one that he shared with his contemporary political thinkers and philosophers. At a theoretical level, it was based on the Kantian question of how to integrate individual freedom and the universal law of reason. At a historical and practical level, it was the pressing political problem of how to emancipate a given number of individuals and allow them to constitute themselves into a political and moral community while at the same time preventing the process from sliding into anarchy and unbridled violence. It was the chicken-and-egg problem of emancipation and education, with which Schiller, Novalis, and Fichte had struggled before.

In his *Vesta* article, Fichte had toyed with the idea of an educative dictatorship. Novalis, in his 1798 *Glauben und Liebe* had still been full of hope in the spiritual and moral renewal that the new monarch would bring to Prussia. Schiller, horrified by the experience of the Terror in France, had argued for the aesthetic state as a utopian yet regulative ideal of *Politik*. Clausewitz considered these options in passing in his reform writings: the notion of 'the most beautiful of wars' is almost a nod to the aestheticization of the concept of *Politik* and freedom as introduced by Schiller, stretched by Clausewitz to the field of war. In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, the king played a vital role in people's war as the unifier and the authority that can enact reprisals against the opponent. Clausewitz, in Fichtean fashion, also pondered to what extent the state could force its citizens to take up arms in a popular insurrection against Napoleon.

And, yet, Clausewitz's answer to the political dilemma of education and emancipation is a genuinely original one: war, in its transformative and existential form, had to be the great educator of man. War was both the

subject and the means of *Politik*, but its end was freedom. Clausewitz's writings from the reform years encapsulate far more than a political programme. They are based on systematic philosophical considerations of issues such as individuality and the possibility of political community. The trait that they share with the philosophical writings of Schiller in particular consists in the utopian quality of these texts. Clausewitz is at a loss to prove that people's war is feasible, but his argument that it would lead to the spontaneous constitution of a united political community remains speculative. The crux of Clausewitz's notion of existential war was that, if war was the subject of political transformation, then *Politik* could not anticipate its political outcome. Hence there was no need for Clausewitz to spell out what kind of reformed political system he had in mind. It had to be meritocratic, and possibly a constitutional monarchy (a point we will return to in Chapter 4), but that is all the information the reader can glean from Clausewitz's texts from the reform years. His silence on the possible parameters of political reform have often been interpreted as signs of Clausewitz's apolitical or even conservative *Weltanschauung*, but they are consequential only against the background of the existential conception of war. In a note from 1809, Clausewitz wrote: 'They want a revolution—I have nothing against it; but won't this revolution of state and society be more easily accomplished if all elements are active and in motion, as happens in war? Where, otherwise, is the prospect of a healthy revolution, the prospect of salvation?'[106]

In this account, war was the driving force of *Politik*. Its ends were still political, but *Politik* could not control them. As we shall see in Chapter 5, this interweaving of *Politik* and war was not the frustrated ramblings of a sentimental and naive patriotism in Clausewitz; on the contrary, it was an important developmental step for the discussion of the relationship between *Politik* and war in *On War*.

[106] Clausewitz, note from 1809, in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 76.

4

Partisanship, Demagoguery, and the Decline of *Politik* after 1815

Clausewitz's politics have been a puzzle to many scholars. On the one hand, many have depicted Clausewitz as an (increasingly) conservative thinker. According to Peter Paret, Clausewitz turned from a naive and sentimental patriotism to a more mature, realist focus on *raison d'état* in his later years.[1] Both Azar Gat and Beatrice Heuser see him as a social and political conservative.[2] Daniel Moran highlights that Clausewitz's thoughts on forms of political representation were ambivalent throughout his lifetime.[3] On the other hand, revolutionaries such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and Mao Zedong read Clausewitz's works with great interest and had little difficulty integrating his thoughts into their revolutionary programmes. Carl Schmitt took a middle road between these two approaches by depicting Clausewitz as a 'partisan' who challenged the Napoleonic Empire in order to restore the *jus publicum Europeaum*.[4] Hence, in Schmitt's eyes, Clausewitz was a conservative revolutionary.

Schmitt is correct in that the notion of the 'partisan' played a significant role not only in Clausewitz's theory of war, but also in his approach to politics and political institutions. Yet, if the eighteenth-century *petite guerre* tradition and the emergence of people's war were one side of the coin of this notion, its dark flipside consisted of societal division and political demagoguery. The partisan is thus a deeply ambivalent figure for Clausewitz. This ambivalence is rooted in his ambiguity towards the French Revolution—and even that in the eyes of Clausewitz and many of his contemporaries oscillated between the promise of liberation and the threat of anarchy.[5]

[1] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 438ff.

[2] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 238ff; Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 49ff.

[3] Daniel Moran, 'Introduction to Part Two', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Historical and Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Peter Paret and Daniel Moran (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 238.

[4] Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen*.

[5] See Chapter 3, p. 80ff.

This chapter reconstructs the evolution of Clausewitz's political thought from 1815 to his death in 1831. This evolution is significant in so far as a radical break in Clausewitz's political thought would undermine the argument that the origins of his theory of war are to be found in his thinking on small war. Small war as people's war had, by definition, the potential to turn into revolutionary war. Had Clausewitz turned his back on his 'youthful' embrace of people's war, that would mean that *On War* has to be interpreted as his mature oeuvre with only spurious ties with his earlier writings.

This is not the case. Arguably, after 1815, Clausewitz became increasingly concerned with the potentially divisive and antagonistic effects on the political and social empowerment of the people. Once again, 'philosophers' (and what Clausewitz mostly meant with this notion is *Enlightenment* philosophers) were the target of his ire. While, in his early writings, the 'partisan' featured as a primarily military figure, whose characteristics had, however, political implications, after 1815 the partisan acquired predominantly political dimensions. Clausewitz's use of the term in his later writings denounced the partisan as a political ideologue and a demagogue. It was this scepticism about politics based on 'moral' principles that prompted Clausewitz's strong reservations against the restitution of the Polish state. Yet, Clausewitz never ceased to defend the *Landwehr* against its detractors, whose number grew steadily after 1815. He stood by the essence of his pre-1815 conviction that the *Landwehr*, rather than a parliament or any other form of political representation, was the source of popular sovereignty.

Much has been made of Clausewitz's alleged 'turn' to Machiavelli in his later years. In many Clausewitz interpretations, Machiavelli stands as shorthand for 'realism'. Both the superficial analysis of Clausewitz's reception of Machiavelli and the equation of the latter with 'realism' are problematic. This chapter will, therefore, first turn to the question of Clausewitz's intellectual connection with Machiavelli and its significance for Clausewitz's political perspective. The second section is devoted to Clausewitz's political writings after 1815. Specifically, it considers his two 1819 memoranda on the *Landwehr*, his text *Umtriebe* (*Agitations*) dating from the early 1820s, and his two essays on the Polish question from 1831. These texts will be supplemented by information gleaned from Clausewitz's letters and his historical writings of the post-1815 phase where necessary. The third section evaluates Clausewitz's political writings after 1815 with a view to three specific themes. First, regarding the question of Clausewitz's 'democratic' or 'liberal' credentials, the analysis of his post-1815 political writings yields no indication of a substantial change in his attitude towards political representation and popular sovereignty. For Clausewitz, before 1815 and after, the *Landwehr* is the most important political institution and the source of popular sovereignty. Secondly, there is indeed a slight shift in Clausewitz's assessment of politics after 1815 that reflects a concomitant historical shift in the political process in Prussia and Germany:

whereas before 1815 Clausewitz regarded a retreat into private life of its citizens as the most dangerous aspect of Prussia politics, after 1815 his concerns were increasingly focused on the polarization of the political process in Prussia and Germany. Finally, the chapter assesses the role of 'balance-of-power' notions in Clausewitz's thought on foreign policy. It concludes that the idea of a 'balance of power' for Clausewitz was closely tied to his assessment of the defensive as the stronger form of war. As such, the concept of 'balance of power' in his perspective was as relevant for domestic politics as it was for foreign policy. This, then, differentiates Clausewitz's thinking on 'balance of power' from classical realist, and in particular from neo-realist, interpretations of the concept.

CLAUSEWITZ THE r/REALIST?

No label has ever more persistently stuck to Clausewitz than that of 'realism', and sometimes even 'Realism', with the latter denoting his alleged proximity to one of the central theoretical paradigms of twentieth-century International Relations. Yet, the first problem that needs to be noted is that different scholars have applied widely differing notions of 'realism' to Clausewitz. Clausewitz as a 'realist' could be understood in contrast to Clausewitz the 'idealist'. Indeed, Heuser thinks that Clausewitz integrated both aspects in his theory of war. For her, Idealism demarcates Clausewitz's pure notion of war as 'absolute war', whereas realism reflects the instrumental character of war and its subordination to politics.[6] Alternatively, Clausewitz's alleged 'realism' could mean that he was a pragmatist and a practical person by dint of his practitioner background rather than a free-floating philosopher of war, which is the way in which Bruno Colson frequently uses the term.[7] Yet, for Colson, being *réaliste* also seems to convey the idea that Clausewitz was a political moderate, rather than a diehard liberal or even a revolutionary: 'He is to all intents and purposes a realist, a partisan of the *just milieu*.'[8]

Most often the label of 'realism' is applied to Clausewitz in the context of his reception of the Italian Renaissance political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. Heuser at one point writes that Clausewitz was a 'disciple of Machiavelli'.[9] According to Paret, Clausewitz's 1809 letter to Fichte has to be interpreted as an early indication of the mature Clausewitz's turn to realism.[10] 'Obviously',

[6] e.g. Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 24ff.
[7] e.g. Bruno Colson, *Clausewitz* (Paris: Perrin, 2016), 295.
[8] Colson, *Clausewitz*, 289; cf. p. 385.
[9] Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 50. It should be noted, however, that Heuser does not make the claim that Machiavelli is the founding father of Realism.
[10] Paret, 'Machiavelli, Fichte, and Clausewitz', 78–95.

Paret explains, 'Clausewitz felt a strong intellectual affinity with a writer who insisted that, above all, the state was an institution created and maintained by the realistic use of force'.[11] In a similar vein, Gat argues that 'Clausewitz and Fichte, like most of their contemporaries, applied the darker side of Machiavelli's teaching to foreign affairs'.[12]

Yet, remarks such as these open up more questions than they are able to answer. First, authors such as Paret and Gat depict Clausewitz as a 'Machiavellian' and Machiavelli himself as the founding father of 'realism', but is that correct? And, secondly, what does 'realism' mean?

Regarding the first question, we have to note that Clausewitz is not consistently positive in his judgement on Machiavelli. He began the fourth and the fifth texts in his *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804* with an observation on Machiavelli, but quickly went on to ponder the author's limitations. In the fourth text, Clausewitz commented on Machiavelli's observation that victory in battle conveys a moral advantage, but he added that defeat too can lead to an upsurge in energy and resolution—this, of course, formed part of his nascent thoughts on defence as the stronger side of war. In the fifth text, Clausewitz underlined the significance of Machiavelli's republicanism of the *Discorsi*, which many interpreters have found hard to square with the latter's monarchism in *The Prince*.[13] In the same vein, Clausewitz remarked in another note from 1807 that Machiavelli's teachings on domestic politics are outdated. In this note, Machiavelli is his witness against the 'humanist petit-maîtres' of his time—in other words, against the philosophers of perpetual peace.[14] Specifically, Clausewitz advised policymakers to read Chapter 21 of the *The Prince*, which covers Machiavelli's attack on the politics of neutrality: 'irresolute princes, to avoid present dangers, generally follow the neutral path, and are generally ruined'.[15] In the same vein, in the first part of his letter to Fichte, as shown in Chapter 3, Clausewitz was highly critical of Machiavelli's advice to resurrect the ancient forms of war, while he thought that a reanimation of their spirit was needed. Clausewitz hence referred to Machiavelli in order to refute the arguments of 'peace-loving philosophers', but he was not a 'disciple of Machiavelli'.

It is equally not convincing that Clausewitz 'was far closer to Machiavelli's incipient *ragione di stato* than was Fichte'.[16] Arguably, in book I, Chapter 1, of *On War* Clausewitz referred to *Politik* as the 'personified intelligence of the state'. But this is not in the context of 'realist' themes such as state survival or

[11] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 172.
[12] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 241.
[13] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 41ff.
[14] Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 209. See also p. 223 for Clausewitz's critique of Machiavelli on domestic politics: 'No one could ever offend me more than by believing that I would do more for someone whom I fear than for someone whom I love.'
[15] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1961), 69.
[16] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 179.

power politics. The form that this 'intelligence' takes decides the way in which the state in question wages war. The closer this intelligence resembles the '*conventional* notion of a violence-averse, cautious, disingenuous, even dishonest prudence', the more the state in question is likely to use war as an instrument for narrowly defined state interests. As we know, however, this is only one end of the conceptual spectrum of war—absolute war with its tendency to take over the political process is the counterweight. Thus, to the extent that Machiavelli can be identified with more instrumental, limited forms of war, his teachings do not cover the full range of war and hence remain at a lower level of abstraction.[17]

In addition to this, we have to be careful not to follow the 'caricature' of Machiavelli as the founding father of 'r/Realism'. In his seminal essay '"The Prince" and "the Pauper"' R. B. J. Walker calls into question the traditional association of Machiavelli with 'power politics' and 'Realism'. Rather than being associated with anachronistic labels, Machiavelli should be understood as a pragmatic proponent of political philosophy guided by civic virtue in the face of political change.[18]

Labelling Clausewitz a 'r/Realist' is thus a questionable judgement, and one that should not frame our approach to his political writings. For one, the label is plainly ahistorical. The discipline of International Relations had not yet emerged in Clausewitz's time, and neither had its competing epistemological paradigms. Linking Clausewitz to the 'r/Realist' school of thought through his alleged 'admiration' for Machiavelli is no less tenuous. Clausewitz was far from being an uncritical 'disciple of Machiavelli'. On the contrary, he praised Machiavelli for some arguments, but equally chided him for others. Finally, Machiavelli's own credentials as the 'founding father of r/Realism' have been questioned.

Realism itself has been attacked since the 2000s for having become little more than an empty signifier that is loosely related to widely diverging world views and policy prescriptions. This is a fair criticism, but there do appear to be some core convictions that characterize a 'r/Realist' approach to international politics. The state as the primary unit of analysis is one; the inherent scepticism regarding the pursuit of policies that are based on moral principles is another. It remains to be seen whether Clausewitz happened to share either of these convictions, and, if so, what that means for an assessment of the post-1815 political situation in Europe.

[17] See also Muriel Cozette, 'Realistic Realism? American Political Realism, Clausewitz, Raymond Aron and the Problem of Means and Ends in International Politics', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 27/3 (2004), 440.

[18] R. B. J. Walker, '"The Prince" and "the Pauper": Tradition, Modernity and Practice in the Theory of International Relations', in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian, and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989), 32.

CLAUSEWITZ'S POLITICAL WRITINGS AFTER 1815

Clausewitz's writings on politics after 1815 include two 1819 texts about the *Landwehr*, *Umtriebe*, written in the early 1820s, and finally two texts on the Polish question from 1831. This section will consider these texts and contextualize them through Clausewitz's correspondence and some of his historical writings.

In 1819, Clausewitz wrote two memos on the *Landwehr*. What prompted him to pen these texts was ostensibly a change in Prussia's political atmosphere and landscape. On 18 October 1817, the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig and the third centenary of Martin Luther's ninety-five theses, students and intellectuals had held the Wartburg-Fest, a celebration with significant nationalist under- and overtones. Many of those who attended the Fest were said to have been members of Lützow's Black Free corps, a pan-German unit that had fought in the wars of liberation. On 23 March 1819, the student Karl Sand had murdered the popular poet August von Kotzebue for political reasons. Kotzebue was a figure that Friedrich Schiller and many of the Jena Romantic circle reviled. The German public and the Prussian royal court, however, admired Kotzebue's plays. The Romantics disliked him because he was not a poet of consequence, as many Romantics saw themselves. The fact that he was in favour both at court and with the masses seemed to embody Prussia's crisis before 1813, which the Romantics thought was based on decadence, which had a hold over both the people and the elites. Kotzebue's plays were shallow, and he did not subscribe to the idea that the theatre and the arts more broadly could serve as a vehicle for education and, ultimately, emancipation.[19]

German governments reacted to what they perceived as a 'Jacobin' plot against their political authority by adopting the Carlsbad decrees on 20 September 1819. The Carlsbad decrees revealed that governments regarded universities in particular as 'hotbeds' for revolutionary agitation and political radicalization. Censorship was imposed on the press. Special commissions were to be formed to investigate revolutionary plots and demagogical associations. The year 1819 was also the one in which Clausewitz's name was first put forward as Wilhelm von Humboldt's successor in the post of Prussian ambassador to London. It is hence not surprising that Clausewitz, in a political climate marked by increasing paranoia about revolutionary plots, felt the need to defend the institution of the *Landwehr* against its growing number of detractors.

The two texts about the *Landwehr* are very similar. The gist of Clausewitz's argument is that for Prussia the danger of external aggression was more worrying than the risk of an internal revolution:

[19] George S. Williamson, 'What Killed August v. Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and Political Theology', *Journal of Modern History*, 72/4 (2000), 890–943.

> It cannot be denied that the institution of the *Landwehr* would facilitate the arming of the insurrectionary part of the people in case of a formal civil war. Yet, such wars, which ought not to be confused with revolutions caused by presumption and factionalism, are a rare historical occurrence indeed, and always have large causes that would have triggered the rupture even without the *Landwehr*.[20]

Clausewitz's objective in both his *Landwehr* texts was to dispel fears that the *Landwehr* could become an instrument of political instability. That he perceived the need to do that reflects the political climate in Prussia and Germany in 1819.

> The institution of the Landwehr […] *evidently arms the people*. The people, like any people, are hard to satisfy entirely; one could even say that this is completely impossible in the narrowest sense. But now is a time that is characterized by fretful aspirations and dissatisfaction with the government; it is hence *now twice as dangerous to arm the people*.[21]

Clausewitz refuted this line of thought and concluded that the abandonment of the *Landwehr* could mitigate the threat of revolutionary turmoil. Only the 'fair and wise treatment of the army, the *Landwehr*, and the people' could nip revolutionary stirrings in the bud.[22] The real reason for the monarchy's antipathy towards the *Landwehr* was to be found in the Prussian royal court's 'feeling of isolation'.[23] Clausewitz went on to counsel reform of Prussia's political system as a means to bridge the gap between the king and the people. Clausewitz's model for the realization of such a proposal was a parliamentary monarchy along the lines of the British example.[24] He insinuated that the *Landwehr* could serve both as a defensive force against outside invasion and as a domestic force for the suppression of political rebellions.

The text 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung' is longer than the 'Über die politischen Vorteile und Nachteile der preussischen Landwehr' text. In his usual pragmatic and dialectic manner, Clausewitz calculated and deliberated the *Landwehr* and compared it to a system based solely on a standing army or one based on a combination of army and reserve forces. But the financial and organizational superiority of the *Landwehr* system vis-à-vis its alternatives was only one aspect for Clausewitz. More important still was that the *Landwehr*, for Clausewitz, continued to hold its emancipatory promise, the involvement of the people in politics through their involvement in their country's defence.

[20] Clausewitz, 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 152.
[21] Clausewitz, 'Über die politischen Vorteile und Nachteile der preussischen Landwehr', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, ed. Malmsten Schering, 203.
[22] Clausewitz, 'Preussische Landwehr', 206.
[23] Clausewitz, 'Preussische Landwehr', 206.
[24] Clausewitz, 'Preussische Landwehr', 206.

> But this moral potential of the institution of the *Landwehr* also reaches deep into the physical construction of men. If all institutions are geared towards the institution of the *Landwehr*, all levers of the state are aimed at it, and all public offices high and low are instructed to [support?] this institution, which in reality has no limits except for those of the absolute strength of the people, then the top-down impact of all these machines will have a greater effect than if everything remains detached from the people.[25]

Clausewitz's plea for a combination of the 'strength' and passion of the people with the workings of the machine-like levers of state power echoes themes that he had already used in his writings from the reform years, as we have seen in Chapter 3. He ended the *Kriegsverfassung* text with a final blow to the *Landwehr*'s detractors by unmasking the latters' concerns as *ancien régime* snobbishness.

> But it is not so much a patriotic concern over a lack of technical skills on the part of the *Landwehr* officers, but rather the uncomfortable feeling about seeing the officer class transformed through the integration of foreign elements and seeing the son of an aristocrat serving next to that of a grocer or even under him, that creates resistance.[26]

According to Clausewitz, the aristocracy had to wake up to the social and political realities of the new era. Even though Prussia had not seen a revolution, the time of aristocratic privilege was over, if only because Prussia's neighbours had unleashed new potentials by enabling a more meritocratic society.

Clausewitz ended the text by pointing out the distinction between revolutions and civil wars. As we have seen in the Chapter 3, this was a distinction that he had already made in his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*. In both contexts, the spectre of civil war for Clausewitz signified an apocalyptic vision of politics in the sense of a Hobbesian war of all against all. In contrast, revolutions are depicted not so much as political movements but as forces of nature that find their outlets in the social circumstances of their times—not unlike Marx's historical materialism. This is a distinction that Clausewitz had established early in his career, but it would become more significant in his post-1815 writings, where his political concerns turned away from revolutionary anarchy and focused increasingly on factionalism and political polarization.

Rothfels interprets *Umtriebe*, a text Clausewitz wrote in the early 1820s, as Clausewitz's attempt to apply 'the idea of power' ('den Machtgedanken') to the domestic institutions of the state.[27] Rothfels treats this as proof that 1812 was a turning point for Clausewitz's political thought. Colson follows this lead and writes that 'in the name of realism, he condemns […] the nascent aspirations

[25] Clausewitz, 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung', 148.
[26] Clausewitz, 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung', 151.
[27] Rothfels, 'Einleitung', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, p. xxiv.

towards German unification as the objective of a constitution that would organize a representative government'.[28] He also sees *Umtriebe* as the most conspicuous indicator of Clausewitz's political transformation. Peter Paret remarks that Clausewitz's turn away from the idea of a parliamentary monarchy along the lines of the British model does signify a break in his political attitude.[29] Clausewitz justified his change of heart on the parliamentary question with a view to Prussia's geopolitical position: Prussia was surrounded by potential opponents and hence needed absolute political unity in his government, whereas Britain could afford a parliament owing to its relatively isolated, insular position.[30] Yet, this argument was hardly a new development in Clausewitz's thought. Already in a 1807 text entitled 'The Germans and the French', Clausewitz had observed that the spirit of the Germans was most suited to a republican political system 'in which their spirit of critique could blossom and their lawful participation in government would tie their interest more closely to their fatherland and limit their natural cosmopolitanism'.[31] Alas, Clausewitz concluded, Germany's geopolitical situation did not allow for republican structures.

Umtriebe also poses the question of the extent to which Clausewitz adopted a more moderate or 'conservative' tone owing to a desire to reingratiate himself with Frederick William III, who had not taken well Clausewitz's decision to leave Prussia for Russia in 1812. Clausewitz's ambition to succeed Wilhelm von Humboldt as ambassador to London would make it plausible to assume that he wrote *Umtriebe*[32] as an acerbic criticism of the political 'agitators' in order to assure the king that he begged to differ. Yet, a comparison with what Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau (towards whom he would have been unguarded) reflects that many of his worries regarding the political polarization in Prussia and Germany were genuine. Furthermore, it is questionable whether Clausewitz could have saved his candidacy by appeasing the king. Both Vanya Bellinger and Bruno Colson have shown that Clausewitz's hopes were finally quashed because he fell victim to an intrigue that was instigated not by the Prussian court, but by the then British ambassador to Berlin, Sir George Henry Rose, and his close ally, the Duke of Cumberland, who was an influential, even though deeply divisive and ultraconservative, figure in Prussian political circles.[33]

[28] Colson, *Clausewitz*, 342.

[29] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 304. Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 174.

[30] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 174.

[31] Clausewitz, 'Die Deutschen und die Franzosen', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 46.

[32] Moran makes this argument in his introduction to the text 'Umtriebe', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Historical and Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Paret and Moran, 336.

[33] Bellinger, *Marie von Clausewitz*, 184; Colson, *Clausewitz*, 315ff.

Moreover, there are more instances of continuity in the *Umtriebe* text itself than its reputation among Clausewitz scholars would suggest. *Umtriebe* reflects, once again, Clausewitz's acute awareness of the historicity of society and its political institutions. He devoted the first twenty print pages of the text to the historical development of the estates from the Middle Ages to his time. The most significant aspect of this development was, according to Clausewitz, the decline of the aristocracy, the rise of the middle classes, and the slow but steady economic emancipation of the peasants. This social development was concomitant with the centralization of political power in the absolute monarch. The error of the Enlightenment philosophers consisted, for Clausewitz, in their refusal to understand political developments as a result of historical processes.

> These philosophers were neither accustomed nor predisposed to regard the state of society as a product of historical developments; they started with the abstract notion of the social contract and hence saw injustice and depravity everywhere. So the tempers rose and this political enthusiasm had the effect that religious enthusiasm had during previous eras; it was the sour dough that was supposed to provide the fermentation ground for the masses.[34]

He further referenced Justus Möser, sometimes said to be the founding father of historicism in Germany. More specifically, Clausewitz referred to Möser's last text, his article entitled 'Noch etwas über die Geburtsrechte' published in the *Berliner Monatsschrift* in 1794. In it, Möser defended the estates as the basic structure of political organization. While Clausewitz obviously shared a large extent of common ground with Möser in the area of historicism, he differed widely from the latter with respect to the political significance of the estates. Clausewitz's central message in *Umtriebe* is that the estates have become an anachronism and a political liability.

When it comes to the question of whom Clausewitz identified as the instigators of the political agitation of the late 1810s and early 1820s, Joseph Görres ranks very high on the list of prime suspects. 'This Görres would be well equipped to play a role in a revolution,' wrote Clausewitz.[35] Clausewitz's attack on Görres has mostly been interpreted as an irrefutable sign that, by the time he wrote *Umtriebe*, Clausewitz had turned his back on all political causes that could be seen as 'liberal' or even 'Jacobin'. Still, the Clausewitzs were friends of the Görres throughout both couples' time in Coblenz.[36] Görres was a publicist who, in his younger years, had been an ardent defender of the French Revolution. He had founded and then edited the paper *Rheinischer Merkur* from 1813 until 1816, when the *Merkur* was finally shut down by Prussian censorship. The gist of the *Merkur* had been fiercely anti-Napoleonic and critical of Prussia. In some respects, Görres's opinions could be said to be 'liberal'.

[34] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 163ff.
[35] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 179.
[36] Colson, *Clausewitz*, 297.

Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau in 1817 that Görres 'was more of a democrat than is fitting in a great monarchy', even though he concluded that he was an 'upright and high-minded man'.[37] Clausewitz took issue with the fact that Görres had drafted a petition to Friedrich Wilhem III in 1817, in which he reminded the latter of his promise of a constitution. On 12 November 1817, Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau on the matter before he had even seen the text of the petition. He chided Görres for approaching the king directly as a subject, which he found 'dangerously democratic'.[38] He elaborated further:

> Furthermore. A state of superior law, as long as there is any other means, ought not be initiated by properly revolutionary intervention that merely results from individual capriciousness which is not based on any law, right or custom. […] This is how I believe it ought to be from the first to the last step, and any other route that is given to convey the voice of the people to the throne, to bring the will of the people into conflict with the government, such as people's petitions and people's societies, seems to me like a disorganizing running sore.

As Clausewitz wrote to his close friend Gneisenau, his opinion on Görres has to be taken at face value in this context. This would suggest that Clausewitz's concern over too democratic opinions was genuine, and cannot be attributed to any kind of self-censorship.

It is once again the question of how to keep society from falling apart that exercised Clausewitz. In his letter to Gneisenau, he used for the first time the argument that the Prussian monarchy is isolated from its people and that society has lost its vital structure that formerly served as communication channels: the estates. There is no societal 'pyramid' any more, Clausewitz complained, and the king hovered over the unstructured masses like a bird on a bird perch.[39] Hence in 1817 Clausewitz still believed that the estates system could be used as a basis for Prussia's socio-political future. His judgement on Görres in 1817 was also not entirely negative. He suggested that Görres should be given an important position within the Prussian administration, as a way of neutralizing his political energies: 'it will teach him how difficult it is to satisfy the demands of the *opposition*.'[40]

By the time Clausewitz wrote *Umtriebe*, the political situation had changed. The adoption in 1819 of the Carlsbad decrees was an important victory for the *Ultras*, as Clausewitz called them, who had gained confidence and influence.

[37] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 17 December 1817, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg,, ii/1. 308.

[38] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 12 November 1817, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg,, ii/1. 304.

[39] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 28 October 1817, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 302.

[40] Clausewitz, 'Über Görres', in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 309; emphasis in original.

The temperature of the political atmosphere had also cooled in the meantime: 'of course, there is hardly any talk of agitations anymore.'[41] Clausewitz was by now clearly appalled by the political reaction that had gained control over Prussia and much of Germany.

> To ask one of our *Ultras* to confess to the fact that the French Revolution has brought much good, or, in other words, much that our times required (because nobody knows the absolute good), is indeed asking too much, and one would have to have a staunch reputation as an enemy of all revolutions and agitations to make this argument.[42]

In *Umtriebe*, Clausewitz's main charges against Görres are, first, that he advocated the unification of Germany to a 'Kaiserreich', and, secondly, that he advocated a standing army.[43] Even more importantly, Clausewitz chided Görres both for being 'stockdemokratisch', a staunch democrat, and for being in favour of the resurrection of the estates. This was what Clausewitz had taken away from reading Görres's 1819 essay 'Germany and the Revolution'. 'The essay was in its essence antirevolutionary. […] Görres's outlook was moving closer to the conservative romanticism of figures like Adam Müller, who called for an "integral" state, that is, a state based not on competition among political parties but on spiritual coherence.'[44] Görres, Müller, and Clausewitz, like Fichte, Clausewitz, and Schiller before, sought answers to the same question: how to prevent the seemingly imminent disintegration of society. Clausewitz's solution, before as well as after 1815, was the institution of the *Landwehr*. In *Umtriebe*, he attacked the detractors of the *Landwehr*: 'they found our military institutions too democratic. They believed that our army boasted a spirit of independence and that our *Landwehr* would be a dangerous institution in revolutionary times.'[45] In 1820, Clausewitz made it abundantly clear that he saw the *Landwehr*, but no longer the estates, as the sole viable instrument of social integration. To the extent that the estates had become the staunchest critics of the *Landwehr*, they had lost their legitimacy in Clausewitz's eyes. He wrote to Gneisenau in 1820:

> A young lawyer and aristocrat took issue with the serfdom that our new form of conscription imposes on people; I replied to him that this serfdom had so far bound four-fifths of the nation—that was based on positive law, was his reply. The sanctity of positive law is now the motto of our *Ultras*.[46]

[41] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 23 October 1820, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 388.
[42] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 23 October 1820, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 389.
[43] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 179.
[44] Jon van den Heuvel, *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1776–1848* (Baltimore: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 250.
[45] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 194.
[46] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 23 October 1820, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg,, ii/1. 388.

There is thus no clear rupture in Clausewitz's political thought after 1815. Clausewitz appeared to go through a phase of greater concern over the imminent danger of societal disintegration in the years 1817–19.[47] Starting in the 1820s, his focus shifted to protecting the *Landwehr* against the forces of the reaction, the *Ultras*. Another interesting document from the early 1820s equally reflects a large degree of continuity in Clausewitz's thought. His text *Preussen in seiner großen Katastrophe*, Prussia in its great catastrophe, written in 1824 or 1825, reflects upon the situation of 1806.[48] In its fundamental assessments, this text differs little from what Clausewitz had already written in his 1806 and 1807 *Historische Briefe über die großen Kriegsereignisse im Oktober 1806*, historical letters on the important military events in October 1806.[49] Prussia had been defeated in 1806 because its anachronistic societal structure and military system had become ossified and 'machine-like'.[50] The political elites in 1806 Prussia, Clausewitz wrote, had worn liberalism and Enlightenment thought like a frock. As a result, the 'essential institutions of the state remained the same'.[51] In the early 1820s, Clausewitz feared once again that society could fall back into some kind of political stupor and leave the state deprived of life and energy.

> But if a great society does not simply want to live a quiet life, but also wants to act as a state individual [*Staatsindividuum*] externally, two things have to be taken into consideration that do not feature prominently in a quiet life.
>
> One is the effectiveness of the government machine, which merges the masses into a unified whole, and the other is the spirit of the people, which conveys life and nervous energy upon the whole.[52]

In the early 1820s, Clausewitz therefore echoed the same sentiments that had characterized his writings in the reform years.

The final texts under consideration in this section are two 1831 memoranda on the Polish question. According to Paret, these two texts provide the definitive proof that the mature Clausewitz had turned away from youthful idealisms of any sort. Here, Clausewitz 'struck a blow for Prussian *raison d'état* and German self-interest'.[53] In a move that ought to be familiar from Clausewitz's earlier writings, he targeted 'the philosophical politicians of our day' for giving preference to their 'moral points of view' as opposed to 'political and historical ones'.[54]

[47] Cf. Colson, *Clausewitz*, 293ff.

[48] Carl von Clausewitz, *Preussen in seiner grossen Katastrophe*, ed. Peter Ungelter (Vienna and Leipzig: Karolinger, 2001).

[49] Clausewitz, *Historische Briefe*.

[50] Clausewitz, *Preussen in seiner grossen Katastrophe,* 16.

[51] Clausewitz, *Preussen in seiner grossen Katastrophe,* 14.

[52] Clausewitz, *Preussen in seiner grossen Katastrophe,* 22.

[53] Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 419.

[54] Clausewitz, 'Die Verhältnisse Europas seit der Teilung Polens' in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 223.

Arguably, in line with Paret's assessment, Clausewitz did consider Prussia's material and political interests with respect to the Polish question.[55] But the general gist of Clausewitz's argument is the stability of Europe as a whole, rather than the aggrandizement of Prussia. In Clausewitz's eyes, idealisms and ideologies were dangerous. The French Revolution, feeding off Enlightenment maxims, had led to the emergence of the French Empire. Clausewitz's concern is safeguarding the European state system against yet another empire based on 'morality'.[56]

In the second text on the Polish question, entitled *Zurückführung der vielen politischen Fragen, welche Deutschland beschäftigen, auf die unserer Gesamtexistenz*, on the basic question of Germany's existence, Clausewitz was more explicitly concerned with the effects that Poland's rebirth would have on Prussia's and Germany's power political position. Poland's resurrection would trigger an alliance with France, Clausewitz reasoned, which would endanger Prussia.[57] Again, Clausewitz attacked the 'educated classes' and accused them of demagoguery, manipulation, and populism: 'Nothing is more common today than to substitute the notion of the entire people with the mere people's party in the capital.'[58] The argument Clausewitz made was that the movement for Polish independence had not, in fact, originated with the Polish people themselves. Rather, it had been peddled by ideologues, in particular in France, and had been echoed by the 'cosmopolitan' parts of public opinion in Europe. Thus the Polish insurrection was, for Clausewitz, not a true people's war or a 'beautiful war'. It was driven by factionalism and ideological delusion.

That Clausewitz did not see the Polish insurrection as people's war does not mean that he had dropped the notion of people's war entirely. On the contrary, in the face of a resurgent French threat, he evoked the 'ethos and the emotion of 1813'.[59] Crucially, he did not argue from a point of view of pure state interest or *raison d'état*:

> We subjects ought not to be ambushed in our breasts; let us arm ourselves with a passion and an ethos that match the greatness of the moment, and let us infuse the material armament with the soul without which it [the armament] will never prevail against an opponent who does everything with passion.[60]

In other words, even shortly before his death, Clausewitz reiterated key tenets of his political *Weltanschauung*: the need to integrate passion and reason, the

[55] Clausewitz, 'Die Verhältnisse Europas seit der Teilung Polens', 224.
[56] Clausewitz, 'Die Verhältnisse Europas seit der Teilung Polens', 234.
[57] Clausewitz, 'Zurückführung der vielen politischen Fragen, welche Deutschland beschäftigen, auf die unserer Gesamtexistenz', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels, 234.
[58] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 238.
[59] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 237.
[60] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 237.

importance of the people for questions of war and strategy, and a vitalistic and emotionally laden appeal to popular passions as a driving force in war.

FROM PARTISAN WARFARE TO PARTISAN POLITICS

Clausewitz's political writings from the post-1815 period are relevant for our understanding of his theory of war in several respects. First, scholars such as Rothfels and Paret have argued that the post-1815 period saw a rupture in Clausewitz's thinking as a result of which his earlier concerns about people's war took a back seat. There are indications that this rupture did not occur and that Clausewitz's political thinking bears more signs of continuity than change. This would strengthen the hypothesis that the direct links between Clausewitz's works on small war and his magnum opus, *On War*, remain to be explored. What Clausewitz's political writings from the post-1815 era do reflect, however, is that Clausewitz, at least for a period from 1817 to 1819, grew increasingly concerned about party political factionalism and what he saw as its result: agitations and demagoguery. By reflecting upon the way in which the emerging political structures in post-1815 Europe influenced war and strategy, Clausewitz also refined his notion of *Politik*. One of the texts that are crucial for this redefinition is Clausewitz's *The Campaign of 1815*, which he wrote in 1827 and 1828.[61] The study of the campaign pondered the crucial way in which party politics in Paris robbed Napoleon of any chance of staging a campaign of resistance against the alliance forces after the latter's successful battles of 1815. In the study, Clausewitz for the first time juxtaposed the subordinate role of war vis-à-vis *Politik* and a refined definition of *Politik* that would be hard to translate as 'policy' and is much closer to 'politics' instead.

Finally, Clausewitz's analysis of *Politik* closely tied together the realm of domestic politics and foreign policy. Indeed, if there is one defining feature that binds together his understanding of *Politik* and his theory of war, it is that a state's societal conditions impact its external power political position via its limiting or enhancing the state's ability to make war. Against this backdrop, the final part of this section will revisit the question of the extent to which Clausewitz's ideas bear any similarities to twentieth-century Realism in International Relations.

[61] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/2. 936–1116.

Clausewitz's Politics

Clausewitz's lifelong ambivalence towards representative democratic institutions and parliaments, in particular, has been widely noted.[62] C. B. A. Behrens, in her review of Peter Paret's *Clausewitz and the State*, took this ambivalence as proof that Clausewitz was a conservative at heart, who would have joined the counter-revolutionary reaction in Prussia in 1848 had he lived to that year.[63] Raymond Aron, whose *Penser la guerre* was published in the same year as Paret's seminal book, wrote that Clausewitz was 'conservative' in opinion.[64] In a similar vein, Azar Gat comments that 'Clausewitz basically maintained the eighteenth-century, Frederickian, paternalist view of politics'.[65]

The problem with these judgements is that they apply contemporary political categories *ex post facto* to Clausewitz's time, which was an era in which the parameters of the modern-day Western political spectrum were only about to emerge.

> In 1819 the categories of liberal and conservative began to be sorted out […]. Up until 1819, virtually all political thinkers favoured a more 'representative' government and wanted some sort of constitution. But the terminology, the very categories needed to understand what precisely one meant by this, was lacking. It was not until Friedrich Gentz in 1819 at Carlsbad equated representation of estates [*ständische Vertretung*] with monarchical sovereignty and representative institutions with people's sovereignty that the division emerged with some clarity. Conservative could now be distinguished from liberal, and, as Friedrich Schlegel wrote at the same time, 'everything immediately became partisan'.[66]

That was precisely the problem, in Clausewitz's eyes. The estates system had outlived its usefulness, as he explained at length in *Umtriebe*. Those who clung on to its privileges undermined the fabric of society and risked stoking the flames of social unrest. The alternative to the estates system, representative institutions, however, fostered divisions in their own right, through dividing the spectrum of political forces into parties. This, in turn, led to agitation and social division.

Clausewitz argued that the remedy against the forces of division, who resided at both ends of the political spectrum, was the *Landwehr*. The *Landwehr* inherently curbed aristocratic privilege by introducing egalitarian, meritocratic structures. In 1808, Clausewitz had written: 'They want a revolution—I don't mind; but would this revolution in the society's and the state's

[62] Moran, 'Introduction to Part Two', 231.
[63] C. B. A. Behrens, 'Which Side Was Clausewitz on?', *New York Review of Books*, 14 October 1976.
[64] Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 37.
[65] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 249.
[66] Van den Heuvel, *A German Life*, 250.

constitution not be facilitated in the medium of war, which generates movement and momentum in all parts?'[67] In 1819, he wrote that the institution of the *Landwehr* alone had the power to merge society into an organic whole and hence should be seen as the true source of popular sovereignty.[68] For Clausewitz, as absurd as it may sound from a contemporary point of view, the *Landwehr* was always a more democratic and integrative institution than parliament. As a result, Bruno Colson's assessment that Clausewitz was not a democrat and neither were his times, but that he was a liberal at heart, is not entirely historically accurate either.[69] It is true that Clausewitz increasingly abhorred the *Ultras*, who hankered for outmoded models of social structures and political institutions. It is also important to note that many of Clausewitz's contemporaries, in particular among the king's conservative entourage, denounced Clausewitz as a 'Jacobin' on more than one occasion. But his support for political representation in the form of a parliament and for the separation of powers was ambivalent and unsteady throughout Clausewitz's lifetime. His real political and societal vision was the *Landwehr* as a quasi-corporate, integrative political, social, and military force.

It is difficult to categorize Clausewitz according to the political divisions of his own time, and even more through the lens of the political spectrum that is common in Western democracies in the twenty-first century. It is hence unsurprising that Clausewitz's readers from opposite sides of the political spectrum could connect to his writings. Clausewitz was exploited for propaganda purposes in Nazi Germany just as much as Lenin read him as a witness to the possibility of violent class struggle. Further afield, his existential idea of war was compatible with ideologies of violence that were diametrically opposed in terms of their political aims, even though not in terms of the means that they endorsed. On the one hand, nineteenth-century 'conservative revolutionaries' such as Ernst Jünger took up the idea of the existential quality of war and violence and fed it into the broader patchwork of Nazi ideologies.[70] After the Second World War, Frantz Fanon argued that the experience of violence was cathartic for people emerging from colonial domination, and that they could posit themselves as political subjects only through engaging in a violent struggle for national self-determination.[71] The ease with which political thought from the extreme ends of the conservative–liberal spectrum was able to connect, if only implicitly, to core tenets of Clausewitz's thought illustrates how elusive they are when approached from an anachronistic point of view.

[67] Clausewitz, quoted in Rothfels, *Carl von Clausewitz*, 216.
[68] Clausewitz, 'Unsere Kriegsverfassung', 148. [69] Colson, *Clausewitz*, 386.
[70] Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1978 [1920]).
[71] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 2001 [1961]).

The Dark Side of the Partisan

As already mentioned, Clausewitz's core political convictions did not change fundamentally between 1815 and 1819, even though, around this time, we can detect a slight shift in nuance in his writings. Before 1815, Clausewitz's most important concern was the atomization of society and the concomitant retreat of its citizens into private life, where they pursue their utilitarian motives without any regard for the common good. During this phase, Clausewitz's language was often rousing, and he invoked heroic virtues in a plea for the infusion of more energy and life into a seemingly dead body politic. In this context, the figure of the 'partisan' was modelled on the eighteenth-century tactical understanding of the term. The partisan, in other words, was the proactive, self-determined, and yet altruistic role model for the citizen–soldier that Clausewitz had in mind. Between 1817 and 1819, a subtle shift in Clausewitz's perception of the societal and political landscape occurred. Clausewitz became increasingly concerned about the polarization and factionalization of society via politics. 'Agitation' is the word that Clausewitz repeatedly used for this state of affairs. To a certain extent, the parameters of the political world had shifted dramatically. The restoration of 1815 had brought peace to Europe, but, instead of pursuing their private lives, when the political situation allowed them to do so, Germany's citizens became increasingly politicized—'agitated': 'It is inexplicably difficult to say what it is exactly that makes our times and our government so odious, what actually is the target of all this ire,' he remarked in *Umtriebe*.[72] 'Fermentation' is the notion that Clausewitz used most frequently in order to describe the dynamic of constant political unrest. It is this political context that made Clausewitz turn away from the endorsement of representative political institutions such as parliaments, which he now sees as 'prone to fermentation'.[73]

While Clausewitz's disdain for the conservative *Ultras* is more palpable than his scepticism towards the liberals, he nevertheless despaired of the polarization that both sides had wrought upon public life in Prussia and Germany. On 26 September 1820, Clausewitz wrote to Gneisenau that 'in order to protect reasonable people from the fools it would be quicker to lock up the former and release those of the latter who are actually locked up'.[74] In this political world, which seems to have turned upside down, the figure of the 'partisan' acquired a new meaning for Clausewitz. In *Umtriebe*, he referred to Lützow's free corps. Ludwig Adolf Wilhelm von Lützow had been the commanding officer of the Black *Jäger* free corps. It had been established in 1813 and was the most prominent free corps that had participated in the wars of liberation. The Black

[72] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 179. [73] Clausewitz, 'Umtriebe', 175.
[74] Clausewitz to Gneisenau, 26 September 1820, in *Claus von Clausewitz: Studien—Schriften—Aufsätze—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/2. 389.

Jäger was a pan-German volunteer unit that had recruited in particular among academics and artists. Both Ludwig Adolf Wilhelm von Lützow and his brother Leopold, who taught at the *Kriegsschule* in the 1820s under Clausewitz's directorship, had been members of Ferdinand Schill's 1811 partisan expedition. Lützow and his Black *Jäger* had become an inspiration to the nationalist Wartburg movement, which Clausewitz thought was politically immature and socially divisive. In this sense, the small-war partisan had turned into the figure of the political partisan.

At first sight, one could read Clausewitz's post-1815 political writings as a denunciation of popular passions and a plea for a return to political reason in the face of emotionally fuelled agitations. Crucially, however, it is not popular passions themselves that Clausewitz held responsible for the agitations. It is still the ideas of Enlightenment philosophy that he regarded as the source of these political stirrings. Once again, according to Clausewitz, 'philosophers' have imbued the people with ideas of popular representation, national self-determination and human rights and have thus whipped up their passions. Reason and passion are once again out of balance, even though the pendulum, post-1817, has swung too far in the direction of polarization and division. For Clausewitz, that did not mean that popular passions had to be suppressed (as was the objective of the Carlsbad decrees). On the contrary, popular passions had to be harnessed to a unifying cause, which was, once again, the *Landwehr*—with the crucial difference that its members were no longer modelled on the figure of the eighteenth-century *petite guerre* partisan.

Even though Clausewitz evidently found the political developments of 1817–19 depressing and a cause for concern, his analysis, as so often, enabled him to refine his understanding of politics. The central historical text in which Clausewitz returned to the question of how party politics affect war is his 'Campaign of 1815', in which he argued that it was the political divisions in Paris that had finished off Napoleon's last hope of military resistance and political survival in 1815.[75] In the same text, Clausewitz formulated his notion of *Politik* in a way that is reminiscent of the way in which Clausewitz treated the influence of *Politik* on war in book VIII of *On War*. He considered that the 'influence of all political elements' had broken Bonaparte's back. These political elements 'permeate more or less all wars, but were dominant in this particular war and showed themselves to be a great liability'. If *Politik* permeated war, it evidently did not always do so in a rational, instrumental way. Understood as politics, it could paralyse as well as dictate action. The roots of this understanding of *Politik* in Clausewitz's mature oeuvre are to be found in his experiences and observations of 1817–25.

[75] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', 982ff. I am grateful to Hew Strachan for alerting me to this connection.

Clausewitz and Balance of Power Politics

The analysis of Clausewitz's political texts after 1815 also gives us the opportunity to reconsider the question the extent to which he became a 'r/Realist' in his mature years. In his 1831 texts on the Polish question Clausewitz did make arguments in favour of giving greater consideration to the preservation of the European balance-of-power system. But this in it itself does not make Clausewitz a 'r/Realist'. He was clear that norms and ethical convictions do have a place in discourses on foreign-policy matters, but counselled that they can be no substitute for power political considerations:

> European powers are by no means indifferent to this position of defence, since they have to attract the opinion of all sane minds and immaculate hearts, both among their own populations and among those of the opponent, and a war such as the one that is to be expected in this case cannot be waged with the resources of cabinets alone, but has to rely on the hearts of the people.[76]

This, however, indicates that Clausewitz's perspective on balance-of-power politics was neither rationalist nor exclusively focused on the level of the state system. Rather, it was closely tied to defence as the stronger form of war. And, as such, it had to rely on the passions of the people, as this was the principal factor in the superiority of defence. The superiority of defence favoured the status quo in the European balance-of-power system; it was, as it were, its inherent modus operandi. In order for defence to play that role, however, the threat of escalating defence into people's war had to be present at all times. *Politik* pervaded war in more than one sense: policy could regard war as an instrument, but the extent to which policy could set the purposes of war depended upon politics—and not only the politics of one's own side, but crucially also those of the opponent.[77] The anti-Napoleonic alliance defeated Napoleon tactically on the battlefield, but the restoration of the European state system—the political purpose of the war—came about partly as a result of the political situation in Paris.

For Clausewitz, the restoration of the European state system was preferable to a structure of empire in Europe, which had, in his lifetime, led to one of the lengthiest and most costly wars that Europe had seen in modern times. Clausewitz was most likely wary of the specific Enlightenment values that had underpinned French expansionism and that showed signs of a resurgence in the framework of the national movements of the post-restoration era. These values, paradoxical as it may sound, since we associate the early nineteenth century mainly with the birth of nationalism, were cosmopolitan in nature. They centred around the ideas of human rights, of liberty and popular sovereignty, and national self-determination. The target of Clausewitz's criticism was not so much values and their role in war and diplomacy as such, but

[76] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 236.

[77] Cf. Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 232ff.

a specific set of values that were deemed to be 'progressive' and caused political and military conflict by threatening to overturn the status quo. But Clausewitz was well aware that norms and values were crucial in the communication between the government and the people regarding the latter's readiness to defend their own country. Discourse that could link popular passions and war had to some extent to be conducted in a moral vernacular in order to reach those 'sane minds and immaculate hearts'.

Thus, Clausewitz's approach to balance-of-power politics differs in important respects from the basic theoretical assumptions of twentieth-century Realism in International Relations. In contrast to the latter, Clausewitz's notion of balance-of-power politics is not based on the assumption of an unbridled rationalism that permeates the entire political realm. *Politik* as politics is just as important as *Politik* as policy. And, to the extent that politics comes into play, Clausewitz's balance-of-power concept is also not exclusively focused on the state level. On the contrary, the existence and survival of states are inherently linked with the readiness of their people to take up arms to defend them, via the device of defence as the stronger form of war.

CONCLUSION

Clausewitz's post-1815 writings are significant in several respects. First, they have often been misinterpreted as a sign of a turn towards more conservative and/or 'r/Realist' positions in his mature years. Both observations are problematic: the spectrum of conservative–liberal/progressive was only emerging in Clausewitz's lifetime, so to apply it with hindsight is probably to distort the assessment. From a contemporary perspective, Clausewitz occupied paradoxical positions that cannot easily be categorized along the lines of the late-modern political spectrum. He was ambivalent about the institutions that ought to structure and integrate society. For a while in the aftermath of the restoration and the short period of political unrest in Germany he pondered the continued usefulness of the estates as a political institution that could mediate between the king and the people. As the representatives of the estates increasingly turned into political *Ultras*, however, their credibility as a mediator shrank rapidly in Clausewitz's eyes. He regarded parliaments with an equal measure of reservation: the liberals who advocated a constitution and a representative system were simply driving the process of political polarization from the opposite end. Hence the institution of the *Landwehr* became all the more important after 1819 and the experience of the political 'agitations' in Germany. During the reform years, Clausewitz had regarded the *Landwehr* as a source of energy and vitality that Prussia desperately needed in order to act decisively against Napoleon. At the same time, the *Landwehr* was to be the

institution that militated against the threat of social disintegration and potential anarchy. After 1815, the integrative function of the *Landwehr* increased in Clausewitz's eyes, as the political landscape in Prussia was characterized by polarization and populism.

In many key respects, therefore, Clausewitz's political position remained partly ambivalent over the course of his lifetime and partly featured continuity. A critical and contextualized interpretation of Clausewitz's post-1815 political writings is crucial, because their misinterpretation in much of the existing scholarship has been significant in buttressing a particular reading of *On War*, which focused on war as a instrument of *state policy*. Such an interpretation favoured the 'formula'—war as continuation of policy by other means—over the trinity and the richer understanding of *Politik* that the latter includes. In contrast, the perspective on Clausewitz's mature understanding of *Politik* that this chapter has provided suggests that *Politik* as policy became less important over Clausewitz's lifetime, whereas *Politik* as politics became more so. His experiences of the political events of post-1815 Prussia were crucial for this process, and they are well reflected in his post-1815 political writings. The increasing politicization of society and the polarization of politics led Clausewitz to reinterpret the notion of the partisan. He moved away from the eighteenth-century idea of the partisan as a tactical role model for people's war and towards the more pejorative notion of the partisan as the *Partheygänger* in its modern guise—a populist party politician and potential demagogue. But this reinterpretation also led him to readjust the notion of *Politik* and its relevance for war. The experiences of 1817–19 resulted in a re-evaluation of the campaign of 1815 and the political reasons that led to Napoleon's final downfall.

This is relevant not only in order to challenge existing interpretations of *On War*, but also with a view to suggesting an alternative interpretation of Clausewitz's thought process. As Anders Palmgren has shown, the superiority of defence actually became more important in the process of Clausewitz's drafting of *On War*. In the absence of an imperial opponent who combined people's war with an offensive strategic posture, in a balance-of-power-based state system, defence would be the default option and indeed the inner mechanism of the balance-of-power system itself. This, in turn, meant that in a balance-of-power system wars were likely to involve an equilibrium in defensive posture, in which neither side had a strong will to attack. That, however, did not imply that people's war had become irrelevant as war itself moved away from the 'absolute' to the 'real' end of the spectrum. On the contrary, the threat of the mobilization of the people had to remain an option, unless the superiority of defence was to be hollowed out. The persistence of the balance-of-power system hinged upon the fact that war was no longer a cabinet affair, for that would risk undermining the ultimate strength of defence. In this case, the balance of power could give way to an empire once again.

5

From Small Wars to *On War*

Clausewitz's Systematic Integration of People's War into His Theory of War

Clausewitz's intellectual development from his early writings to his mature theory of war as he presented it in *On War* is characterized by both continuity and change. The central lines of continuity manifest themselves with respect to the core epistemological and anthropological building blocks of his theoretical efforts. One of the main assumptions of *On War* is the importance of moral or 'spiritual' forces (*geistige Größen*), a theme that was already established in the fragments collated in *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804*. Clausewitz also continued to argue in favour of the integration and harmonization of reason and emotions in both theory and practice. This latter theme, in particular, runs through all his writings, from his earliest efforts through the lectures on small war and the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* to *On War*, like a red thread. The effort to harmonize and balance reason and emotions culminated in the famous trinity in book I, Chapter 1, of *On War*.

It would be hard to exaggerate the significance of this strand of Clausewitz's thought. The integration of spiritual forces and the concomitant effort to devise a theory that was geared towards the analysis of these spiritual forces through the postulate to treat men as both sensible *and* sensual, rational and emotional, beings was what Clausewitz himself thought set his theory of war apart from any other of his contemporaries and predecessors. Even in the depth of his intellectual crisis of 1826–7, Clausewitz hoped that the drafts of *On War*, flawed and incomplete as they were, constituted nothing less than the source of a 'revolution in the theory' of war.[1] The specific targets of his criticism were, in *On War* as before, the overrationalized and mechanistic ideas on war and strategy (or, rather, operations) of the sort that Adam Heinrich von Bülow had popularized.

[1] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 181 (*On War*, 70).

In Clausewitz's early writings, and in particular in the lectures on small war, the integration of reason and emotions is mainly the task of the military commander. He has to combine his intellectual and spiritual strengths in order to retain an overview of the situation (*coup d'oeil*) *and* to be able to act and react. In the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, this ideal of a balanced and rounded individual was stretched to cover potentially the whole of society. In other words, it was democratized. Clausewitz's perspective during the reform years was not only that war required individuals who balanced and integrated reason and emotions, but that war *produced* this integration. War was the only activity that could reform society in a non-destructive way. But Clausewitz's approach to the integration of reason and emotions went through yet another permutation in his post-1815 political writings. After the experience of the Wartburg-Fest, the Kotzebue murder, and the Carlsbad decrees, Clausewitz increasingly worried that reason and emotion were in the process of becoming detached and disintegrated owing to the rapid decline in established social institutions and the concomitant deterioration of public life in Prussia. In *On War*, he returned to the problem of the integration of reason and emotions. In the framework of book I, Chapter 3, on 'Military Genius', in particular, Clausewitz harkened back to the military commander as the role model for a rounded and balanced individual. Partly, the features of the military genius were modelled on Clausewitz's mentor Scharnhorst. But, conversely, Clausewitz's appreciation of Scharnhorst's character had also been guided by his early thought on this integrative ideal.

By Clausewitz's own admission, the drafting of *On War* was not a straightforward or linear process. He changed his approach to small war and people's war in particular in the process of writing *On War*, although this may not be very apparent at first glance to the contemporary reader. By no means did Clausewitz lose interest in small war or think that he had to leave his previous intellectual development behind in order to be able to write a book on big war, even though he emphasized that *On War* was to present 'a theory of major war' ('eine Theorie des großen Krieges') more than once.[2] On the contrary, Clausewitz's intellectual journey, as this chapter will show, was characterized by the effort systematically to integrate small war, and people's war in particular, into his theory of 'major war'.

The crucial turning point for this systematic integration was Clausewitz's rethinking of the device of defence and attack, which occurred in 1826 and 1827. Clausewitz's perspective on people's war in his writings from the reform years was based on what he saw as an exceptional strategic and political situation. Moreover, it was inextricably linked with aspirations of political reform and social emancipation. As Clausewitz rethought the device of

[2] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 181 (*On War*, 70).

defence and attack in 1826 and 1827, he also reassessed the significance of people's war in the framework of Prussia's and Europe's political situation at the time. He had always held that defence was the stronger form of war, but, in his early attempts at formulating the argument as to why this was the case, he had not gained much firm ground, postulating instead that this was simply the case because the attacking side was liable to a faster rate of attrition—an argument that was in fact somewhat tautological. But the process of reformulating the device of defence and attack in 1826–7 and after enabled Clausewitz to develop a clearer idea of the reasons for the superiority of defence as the stronger form of war. Every defender in early nineteenth-century Europe, Clausewitz thought, had the option to draw upon the resistance of the population once the attacker had entered his territory. The integration of the concept of the *Kulminationspunkt*, the culminating point of the attack, helped Clausewitz to think through the problem of the disproportionate rate of attrition on the part of the attacker: the attack was under pressure both because of the defensive measures geared towards it *and* because it was equally at risk of falling victim to its own success. The *Kulminationspunkt* was a theoretical device that illustrated the pitfalls of invasion and occupation in nineteenth-century Europe: where the people would resist, the effort of protecting and maintaining the attacker's lines of communication would be disproportionately higher than in previous 'cabinet wars' in which territorial borders were readjusted, as in a giant dynastic chess game. The threat of people's war, combined with the increasing importance of domestic public opinion, was the reason why a successful attack could become self-defeating.

The integration of people's war into Clausewitz's theory of major war resulted in a strategic and political reassessment of people's war. People's war had featured as a transformative and emancipatory force in Clausewitz's writings from the reform years, and retained these qualities for the mature Clausewitz, even though this proposition was muted in the later revisions of *On War*. The new element after 1826–7, was that Clausewitz conceptualized people's war, or the threat of people's war, as a source of stability in the European balance of power. In other words, Clausewitz's reassessment of people's war post-1826 represented an early attempt at devising a theory of deterrence. From Clausewitz's perspective, this was only consequential, since it allowed him to present an alternative to the idea of 'perpetual peace', which he had found so detrimental to the evolution of strategic debate in Prussia and which he had confronted throughout his life.

This chapter is structured as follows. The next section draws the lines between Clausewitz's early thought on the relationship between reason and emotions and his conceptualization of this relationship in *On War*. The second part reconstructs Clausewitz's systematic integration of people's war into his theory of major war. The conclusion discusses the impact that this reconstruction has on our understanding of *On War*. Clausewitz's theory of

war is a non-binary one. Small war is not just a part of an overarching theory of major war; rather, as people's war, it is the central premise around which his theory of war revolves. As we shall see, Clausewitz's reassessment of people's war also represents the missing link between the reformulation of the device of defence and attack and the increasing integration of *Politik* into his theory of war.

The resulting reconstruction of Clausewitz as an early theorist of deterrence sheds an interesting light on the connection between Clausewitz's theory of war and the early twentieth-century apologists of total war. If Clausewitz thought, as this chapter will show, that the European balance of power could be maintained only by the credible threat of an escalation of war by harnessing the entire population into the war effort, striking links emerge between the concept of absolute war as people's war and total war. The crucial difference between both theoretical traditions is, of course, that Clausewitz thought of people's war in defensive terms, whereas Ludendorff, and later Goebbels, conceptualized 'total war' in the framework of an expansionist ideology, albeit one that often disguised itself with notions of the 'survival of a people'. Moreover, it is ironic to the extent that it highlights deterrence as a crucial piece of common ground between Clausewitz's theory of war and cold-war strategic thinking, which remained, however, undiscovered by the cold-war Clausewitz reception. This is understandable in so far as the mechanism of deterrence that Clausewitz had in mind—the threat of people's war against an attacker who ventured into the defending side's territory—was fundamentally different from the second strike, counter-value deterrent capacity of nuclear strategy, which was based on the threat of the destruction of the attacker's population and infrastructure.[3]

REASON AND EMOTIONS AS BUILDING BLOCKS OF CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORY OF WAR

Clausewitz gave his ideas on the integration of reason and emotion pride of place by building his famous trinity in book I, Chapter 1, of *On War* upon it.[4] Clausewitz's insistence on the significance of emotions for any comprehensive theory of war is aimed, once again, at the mathematical and mechanical approaches to war proposed by Adam Heinrich von Bülow:

[3] There are links with theories of a 'non-offensive defence' that originate principally in West Germany in the 1980s—these will be explored at length in Chapter 6, 148ff.

[4] Cf. Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 117ff.

> It becomes evident from this how mistaken [*unwahr*, literally 'untrue'] one would be by reducing war between civilized peoples to a mere act of reason and by imagining it increasingly to let go of all passion, so that in the end it would no longer need the physical mass of the armed forces, but only their proportions, a kind of algebra of action.[5]

In order to avoid this reductionist approach to war, emotions/passion had to be integrated into the theory of war:

> War is more than a true chameleon, because it not only changes its nature slightly in every concrete case; rather, according to its general phenomenon [*Gesamterscheinung*] it is a wondrous trinity [*wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit*] that is composed of the primordial violence of its element, hatred and enmity, which are to be regarded as a *blind force of nature* [*ein blinder Naturtrieb*], of the play of probabilities and chance, which turn it into a *free activity of the soul* [*freie Seelentätigkeit*], and of its subordinate nature as a political tool [*Werkzeug*], which makes it [war] fall victim to *pure reason* [*dem bloßen Verstande anheimfällt*].[6]

The 'hatred and enmity' corresponds to emotions/passion and is 'mainly' aimed at the people, whereas reason is 'mainly' the realm of government. *Der Feldherr* (the general) 'mainly' represents the free play of the spirit.

The element of pure reason is the side of the trinity that is probably easiest to grasp. Its association with government and war's subordinate nature to *Politik* is more difficult to conceptualize, but this will be partly the task of the next section. Clausewitz's characterization of the emotions/passion side of the trinity as embracing 'hatred and enmity' and as a 'blind force of nature' is the most explicit and extreme he ever wrote about this issue. It should be noted, however, that Clausewitz did not see this side in a negative light. Earlier in book I, Chapter 1, he had written that 'the fight between people actually consists of two different elements, hostile feelings and hostile intentions'.[7] He went on to argue that hostile intentions were the overarching and more general one of those two elements, whereas hostile feelings were not necessary to *start* a war. In book II, Chapter 2, however, Clausewitz explained that 'national hatred', even if it was not constitutive for the start of war, would inevitable emerge as a result of fighting modern wars in particular, as 'retaliation and revenge' became the driving factors for the continuation of hostilities.[8]

Clausewitz's concept of emotions/passion is twofold: on the one hand, as national hatred, emotions are an indispensable motivating force in war, even if they do not necessarily constitute the reason for going to war. This is an argument, as shown in Chapter 3, that Clausewitz had already pursued in his

[5] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 193; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 76).
[6] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 213; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 89); emphasis in original.
[7] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 193; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 76).
[8] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 286; bk. II, ch. 2 (*On War*, 138).

writings from the reform years. In his *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, he left no doubt about the fact that the Prussian monarchy's paralysis could be overcome only by a passionate appeal for a popular insurrection as a last resort of resistance. But in that framework emotions and passion were not merely a source of the empowerment of the individual. On the contrary, if these emotions included courage and a heroic spirit of sacrifice, they would be able to overcome the atomism of the late absolutist Prussian society and enable collective action. In other words, emotions could overcome utilitarian cold reason and encourage action for the common good of the nation.

In a certain sense, the trinity once again pits 'cold reason' against emotions and passion. Yet, emotions and passion are by no means subordinate to 'pure reason', even though war as a 'tool' 'falls victim' to pure reason. In *On War*, emotions and passion, as Clausewitz repeatedly emphasized, still feature as the vitalizing and energizing force in war. At the same time, in *On War* this vitalizing and action-enabling potential of emotions manifests itself predominantly in the figure of the military genius. Emotions both ennoble and vitalize reason. The first emotion that Clausewitz always mentioned in the context of 'military genius' is courage: courage can both enliven and sharpen reason and motivate action. This is particularly important in war, where it is necessary to make '*rapid and accurate decisions*'.[9] But this does not mean for Clausewitz that reason has to be switched off in order to enable action: 'Thus reason first has to inspire the feeling of courage, in order to be maintained and carried forward by it, because feelings dominate men more in the impulse of the moment than thoughts.'[10] Reason and emotions become interlocked.

On the other hand, Clausewitz also used emotions in the sense of sensuality and thus as an indispensable source of cognition. This is precisely the reason why 'a positive science of war is impossible', as Clausewitz stated in book II, Chapter 2. If war were a science,

> the agent would in all cases in which he had to rely on his talent find himself outside of this theoretical construct [*Lehrgebäude*] and in contradiction with it; and the result would be, as indicated before, that talent and genius act outside the law and that theory would stand in opposition to reality.[11]

What Clausewitz highlighted in this context was that cognition and understanding, which were prerequisites of successful action in war, included more faculties than mere reason. 'Talent' and 'genius' were concepts that referred to qualities that went beyond pure reason. In book I, Chapter 3, on 'Military Genius', Clausewitz defined the nature or essence of military genius as a

[9] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 235; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 102); emphasis in original.
[10] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 235; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 102).
[11] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 289; bk. II, ch. 2 (*On War*, 141).

specific manifestation of a '*combined* direction of all forces of the soul [*Seelenkräfte*] for the purpose of military activity [*kriegerische Tätigkeit*]'.

> We say combined because it is the very nature of military genius that it does not consist of one individual directed force, such as courage, or that it has a direction that is not suited to war; rather, *it is a harmonious union of forces*, where one or the other can dominate, but none can resist.[12]

Clausewitz emphasized that it is the harmony of reason and the sensual and emotive faculties of the individual that are the core quality of genius. Reason is important, as Clausewitz explained: where reason is lacking, such as in what he called 'raw, bellicose peoples', military genius occurs only rarely.[13] But reason alone guarantees neither accurate cognition nor a disposition to act.

How do the specific qualities of the military genius translate into his ability to operate outside any 'scientific' law of war? In book II, Chapter 2, of *On War*, Clausewitz defined 'genius' as 'he who rises above the rule'.[14] This echoed Kant's notion of genius as 'he who gives the rule to art'.[15] Kant's notion of genius, too, is an integrative concept, even though it remained largely rationalist. And, yet, genius for Kant was the mind that could bridge the gap between the realms of *noumenon* and *phenomenon* by producing works of art that would replicate or express the laws of *noumenon* without being conscious of it or having direct access to it. Because war involves 'geistige Größen' ('spiritual forces') and because it occurs in the realm of friction and insecurity, it cannot be exhaustively analysed by scientific reason alone. 'Geistige Größen' can be seen only through the 'inner eye'. Emotions such as courage and self-confidence are a 'crystal lens through which sensations travel before they reach reason'.[16] The 'inner eye' is not a Kantian notion. Instead, it is one that Fichte once used in his *Wissenschaftslehre* and that was common currency in German Romantic circles in the early nineteenth century. The notion of *Innerlichkeit*, an inner self, was a central trope in the works of Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel and Ernst Moritz Arndt, both of whom Clausewitz had possibly met, but had certainly heard of.[17]

War both involves moral forces and plays out in the realm of fog and friction; 'it is here, therefore, where we have to rely on a fine-tuned pervasive reason [*Verstand*] in order to *feel out the truth* [*die Wahrheit*

[12] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 231ff; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 100); emphasis in original.
[13] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 232; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 100).
[14] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 283; bk. II, ch. 2 (*On War*, 136).
[15] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §46; cf. Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 102ff; cf. Fernández Vega, 'War as "Art"'.
[16] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 285; bk. II, ch. 2 (*On War*, 138).
[17] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 'Die Wissenschaftslehre, in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse', in *Werke*, i/10, ed. Erich Fuchs et al. (Stuttgart: Fromman Holzboog, 2005), 398; cf. Friedrich Kainz, 'Klassik und Romantik', in *Deutsche Wortgeschichte*, ii, ed. Friedrich Maurer et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 382.

herauszufühlen]'.[18] In other words, even the most genial mind requires emotional access to the world in order the see the truth. Once again, reason and emotions are effectively interlocked for the purpose of a comprehensive cognition. Genius is an integrative concept for Clausewitz. It breaks down the barriers not only between thinking and feeling, but also between understanding and acting. It all becomes one, as in the concept of *coup d'oeil*.[19]

In book I, Chapter 3, of *On War*, on 'Military Genius', Clausewitz articulated ideas that he had already formulated in his essay on Scharnhorst, which he had written between 1814 and 1817. The first two sections of the Scharnhorst essay are entitled 'His Intellect' (*Sein Verstand*) and 'His Heart' respectively, in keeping with a structure that Clausewitz had already employed in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, in which he wrote the first confession from the point of view of passion, whereas the second confession used the language of reason.[20] Scharnhorst embodied for Clausewitz the ideal of a harmonization of reason and emotions/passion. He was, according to Clausewitz, one of the rare men who 'in spite of their clear and productive intellect had not lost *all* enthusiasm of passion'.[21] Scharnhorst possessed self-control. He was capable of deeply felt emotions, but never allowed himself to be carried away by passion. Relating this characteristic back to Clausewitz's writings leading up to the reform years, Scharnhorst also embodied the ideals of what Clausewitz regarded as the German national character: calm, profound, sometimes even seemingly phlegmatic, but steady and definitive in his actions.[22] Clausewitz echoed the requirement of self-control and self-discipline in his chapter on military genius: 'a strong mind [Gemüt] is one *that is not thrown off balance by even the strongest emotions*.'[23]

In the text on Scharnhorst, these qualities of his character made him the role model of the modern citizen: 'Only such an intellect [*Verstand*] is suited to the political life of society in general, but in particular to the art of war.'[24] Here, Clausewitz was evidently echoing his emancipatory programme from the reform years. In his reform writings, he had argued that the qualities that were *required for* and *acquired through* war were the same as those that transformed an individual into a political citizen. In *On War*, Clausewitz shifted this argument to a certain degree, in that he fused the military genius with the 'statesman' (*Staatsmann*).

[18] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 233; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 101); emphasis added.
[19] Cf. Chapter 2.
[20] Clausewitz, 'Charakteristik Scharnhorsts', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Politische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Rothfels 126–39.
[21] Clausewitz, 'Charakteristik Scharnhorsts', 134; emphasis in original.
[22] Cf. Chapter 2.
[23] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 241; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 106); emphasis in original.
[24] Clausewitz, 'Charakteristik Scharnhorsts', 127.

> Leading a whole war or its largest actions, which we call campaigns [*Feldzüge*], to a splendid success, requires a superior insight into higher politics [*die höheren Staatsverhältnisse*]. The conduct of war and policy become one at this point and the military commander becomes a statesman at the same time.[25]

This is in line with Clausewitz's effort to achieve a more seamless integration of *Politik* in his theory of war, as we shall see in the next section. At the same time, the enormity of the task of juggling both realms and their specific concerns—the military and the political—was proof for Clausewitz that a military genius had to have qualities that went beyond a sharp intellect:

> What is required here in terms of higher spiritual powers [*höhere Geisteskräfte*] is unity and judgement, augmented to a wonderful/wondrous [*wunderbar*] insight of the spirit [*Geistesblick*], which in its flight touches and eliminates a thousand obscure sensations, which a common intellect could only draw to light with much effort and hence exhaust itself in the process.[26]

Clausewitz's concept of military genius is crucial for understanding the significance of the harmonization of reason and emotions as an ongoing objective throughout his intellectual career, from his earliest writings until his revisions of *On War*. The concept of military genius is richly layered. It echoes Clausewitz's early writings on the qualities required in the commander of a small detachment.[27] Just as the commander of a raiding mission would have to keep an overview of the general strategic situation, the general as military genius had the capacity to understand and consider the political level of war. Moreover, the concept of military genius also contained elements of Clausewitz's humanist convictions that stemmed from the reform years: by integrating all human faculties, the military genius epitomized the model of an ideal, fully rounded, and educated individual. Self-control was a feature that became increasingly important for Clausewitz after the reform years. While he had hoped for a passionate outburst among the Prussian population between 1809 and 1812, he became more cautious regarding the power of passions after the reform years, in particular as he had witnessed the political turmoil and polarization in Prussia between 1817 and 1819. In this sense, Clausewitz's treatment of the relationship between reason and emotions was also influenced by his political reconsiderations of the late 1810s and early 1820s.[28]

Moreover, the concept of military genius allows for a more thorough understanding of the trinity and the position held 'mainly' by the general in this construct. In the primary trinity, this side of the triangle is characterized as

[25] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 250; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 111).
[26] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 251; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 112).
[27] In *Vom Kriege*, 248; bk. I, ch. 3 (*On War*, 110), Clausewitz explicitly referred to 'Hussars and *Jäger*'.
[28] Cf. Chapter 4.

the realm of 'the play of probabilities and chance, which turn it [war] into a *free activity of the soul*'.[29] The notion of the 'free play of the spirit' is one that Clausewitz had already used in his lectures on small war. It is probably the most difficult element of the trinity. Once again, Clausewitz assigned the integrative function to the military commander, as he had already done in the lectures on small war. In the context of the lectures, the military commander, in particular the commander of small detachments, had featured in an exemplary and educational role that foreshadowed the emancipatory potential of the integration of reason and emotions that was the focus of Clausewitz's writings from the reform years. As discussed in Chapter 2, the 'free play of the spirit' is a notion that had first occurred in the context of Lessing's aesthetics, which were, like Kant's, still a rationalist theory of beauty. Schiller reformulated it in an effort to illustrate that integrative potential of the individual in whom *all* faculties played together.

The reconstruction of the aspect of 'probabilities and chance' in the trinity from the perspective of the concept of military genius evidences that Clausewitz had not, in his mature work, replaced the dichotomous structure of reason and passion with a trinitarian one. Neither had he, as Aron has argued, constructed the trinity so that reason could impose itself on passion with the help of the 'free play of the spirit', which itself was a mere tool of that reason.[30] In spite of his insistence that 'war is a continuation of *Politik* by other means', Clausewitz's trinity consists of an equilateral triangle, and, yet, it is a triangle in which one side—the 'free play of the spirit'—unifies the other two.[31] In other words, in his mature work, and in the trinity specifically, Clausewitz strove to systematize the integration of reason and emotion in the requirement of the 'free activity of the soul' that was able to overcome the potential rift between the two aspects of human cognition and agency. The trinity is not a tripartite structure; rather, it is a dichotomous one, in which the third part of the triangle does not introduce a novel element into the theory of war, but merely serves to bridge the gap in the dual structure of reason and emotions. In terms of the philosophical contextualization of Clausewitz's theory of war, this underscores again its close connections to the post-Kantian programme of overcoming a paradigmatic dualism rather than Hegelian dialectics: Clausewitz's aim is to harmonize between and effectively interweave different human faculties, rather than to 'sublate' the dichotomy between them in a synthesis.[32]

[29] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 213; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 89); emphasis in original.

[30] Raymond Aron, 'Reason, Passion and Power in the Thought of Clausewitz', *Social Research*, 39/4 (1972), 599–621.

[31] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 210; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 87).

[32] For an analysis of Clausewitz's theory of war that emphasizes the Hegelian influence, see Youri Courmier, 'Hegel and Clausewitz: Convergence on Method, Divergence on Ethics', *International History Review*, 36/3 (2014), 419–42; Youri Courmier, *War as Paradox: Clausewitz and Hegel on Fighting Doctrines and Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2016).

It is true that, when Clausewitz wrote about the need for the general to understand *Politik*, he had in mind Napoleon, who embodied the roles of the supreme ruler and the supreme commander in one person.[33] Napoleon had arguably been the 'god of war', but it was his lack of statesman-like qualities that had sealed his ultimate downfall. At Waterloo, he had shown himself not as the 'god of war', but as a desperate gambler.[34] Napoleon had miscalculated the political conditions in Paris, as Clausewitz made abundantly clear in his 1827 study of the 1815 campaign.[35] Being the supreme ruler was different from being a 'statesman'—the latter would have understood the political conditions in his own capital and would have acted accordingly. The genius of the military commander did not merely have to stretch to the level of *Politik* as policy; it had to integrate both policy and politics, both 'pure reason' and emotions/passion. In the end, Napoleon had failed both as the supreme commander and as the supreme ruler. He had not understood the risk of a defence in depth in his 1812 Russian campaign and he had thus brought himself into a situation where he had to risk everything, because the political situation in Paris forced him to do so.

THE SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE'S WAR INTO CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORY OF WAR

In book I, Chapter 1, of *On War*, Clausewitz presented two different approaches to analysing war: according to the first, '*war is an act of force/violence* [ein Akt der Gewalt] *to force the opponent to do our will*'.[36] This approach defines war as an adversial act between two opponents. The second approach to analysing war is contained in the trinity. Clausewitz prepared for it by referring to war as a 'mere continuation of *Politik* by other means', thereby indicating that war is best studied by focusing on the forces and factors that shape it. The adversarial definition of war recedes into the background in order to embed war into its political and social context.[37] Finally, in the trinity, war is suspended between the three poles of the trinity. Yet, the 'primordial violence of its [war's] element' constitutes only one side of this trinity.[38] Thus

[33] Cf. Aron, 'Reason, Passion and Power', 619.

[34] Andreas Herberg-Rothe, 'Clausewitz's "Wondrous Trinity" as General Theory of War and Violent Conflict', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 114 (2010), 48–73.

[35] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Werner Hahlweg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), ii/2. 1087.

[36] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 191ff; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 75).

[37] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 210; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 87).

[38] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 213; bk. I, ch. 1 (*On War*, 89).

there seems to be a tension between the second approach and the first one, in which the element of violence is apparently all-pervasive.

Many scholars have concluded that the argument that Clausewitz developed in the condensed and tightly structured Chapter 1 of book I of *On War* encapsulates his own intellectual development, which moved from a monistic (war is above all an act of violence) to a trinitarian understanding of war, which is, however, heavily tilted towards the subordination of war to pure reason and hence to government policy. In this vein, Aron writes:

> In his youth he [Clausewitz] introduced moral forces into his theory; in his maturity, he introduced the conceptual distinction needed to reconcile transhistoric theory with history, in other words the two extreme forms of war [absolute and real war], each one conditioned or determined by circumstances or political intentions. In order to establish the equality of status in the two types of war, he had to recognize the unreality of absolute war which in many texts he represented as the only one consistent with the concept.[39]

Beatrice Heuser argues that 'Clausewitz only introduced the political variable, for which he is so famous, into his work in the last four years of his life'.[40] As noted in Chapter 1, a large part of the Clausewitz scholarship, in particular the pre-2000s publications, led by Aron and Paret, regard the subordination of war to *Politik* specifically understood as policy as Clausewitz's final legacy.[41] This tradition emphasizes a rationalist and instrumentalist understanding of *On War*. Implicit in this argument is that, in his mature years, Clausewitz moved increasingly away from the chaotic and impulsive realm of people's war towards an interpretation of war that depicted it as an instrument of government policy.

There is a core of truth in this interpretation, but, as it stands, it is too simplistic. Clausewitz did not have a sudden eureka moment in 1827 when he decided to detach and disentangle history and theory by introducing *Politik* into his theory of war. What this interpretation neglects is the extent to which the new accentuation of *Politik* was intertwined with Clausewitz's reformulation of the device of defence and attack that occurred at the end of drafting book VI of *On War*.[42] The new accentuation of *Politik* was most plausibly a result of the connection that Clausewitz had detected in his study of Napoleon's 1812 campaign in Russia between the requirement to convert military successes into political capital in a timely fashion, and the greater difficulty that this requirement posed for the attacking side, which resulted in a lopsided polarity between defence and attack.[43]

[39] Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, 68.
[40] Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*, 41.
[41] Cf. Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, 369.
[42] Cf. Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, 162ff.
[43] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/2. 717–935.

Before we consider the role of Clausewitz's historical studies, in particular those of the 1812 and the 1815 campaigns, we have to take a closer look at book VI of *On War*, in which the transformation in Clausewitz's intellectual development is most visible. Crucially, as this section will show, the process of rethinking and revising his theory of war did not prompt Clausewitz to drop considerations of small war and people's war from his theory of 'major war'. On the contrary, the systematic integration of people's war into Clausewitz's theory of war was what enabled him to negotiate the intellectual impasse of 1826–7. Anders Palmgren's reconstruction of Clausewitz's 'train of thought' is a convincing basis for the development of this argument, which complements Palmgren's rather than trying to supersede it.

At first glance, it would appear that Clausewitz had relegated people's war into an inconspicuous corner of *On War*, buried in the tactical middle parts of his oeuvre. This impression gains added plausibility with Clausewitz's proclamation that small war as people's war is a tactical complement to major war, in line with established eighteenth-century notions of *petite guerre*.

> That such a crisis [that would force the attacker to withdraw] should be caused by mere people's war alone presupposes either such a wealth of territory of the conquered kingdom/empire [*Reich*] that no European state possesses except for Russia, or a disproportion between the attacking army and the territory of the country that never occurs in reality. If one does not want to chase a phantom, one has to imagine people's war in conjunction with the war of regular army, and both united through an all-encompassing plan.[44]

In line with this subordinate position of small war within the larger framework of major war, Clausewitz proclaimed that the aim of book VI, Chapter 26, of *On War* was to explore the military aspects of people's war, 'because we regard people's war as a mere means of combat [*als bloßes Kampfmittel*]', and the question of the political desirability of people's war should be 'left to the philosophers'.[45]

As Clausewitz did not normally have many flattering words for 'philosophers', this statement should be treated with caution. He feigned a disinterest in the political question of people's war, even though in his younger years he had a very clear position on that question. When he was writing *On War*, Clausewitz attempted to keep a low political profile.[46] Arguably, Clausewitz had from the start planned that the publication of *On War* would happen only after his death. His concern was hence not so much with avoiding repercussions for his persona during his lifetime. But he must have been well aware

[44] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 800ff; bk. VI, ch. 26 (*On War*, 480).
[45] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 799ff; bk. VI, ch. 26 (*On War*, 479).
[46] Cf. Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 327, who cites a letter of Elise von Bernstorff's in which she reported Clausewitz's desire not to cause political offence, in particular towards the Prussian court.

that any association of the book with a 'Jacobin' agenda would have diminished the chances of the book being published—and read—at all.

Yet, Clausewitz did not maintain the detached perspective on people's war that he had set himself at the outset of book IV, Chapter 26, throughout the whole chapter. In the final paragraphs of Chapter 26, he demonstrated that his political position on people's war had not changed much since the reform years.

> No state ought to believe that its fate or, rather, its whole existence depends on one battle, even if it is the most decisive one. When it is fought, the mobilization of new forces from one's own side and the natural weakening that each attack suffers with time can lead to a reversal of the situation, or he [*sic*] can get help from outside. There is still enough time to die, and as it is a natural reflex for a drowning person to clutch at straws, so it lies in the natural order of the moral world that a people will desperately try to save itself, when it finds itself thrown to the margin of the abyss. [...]
>
> Hence a government that, after having lost the main battle, thinks only of letting the people climb into the bed of peace, and, overpowered by the feeling of a failed hope, cannot muster the courage and the passion to mobilize all forces, commits a grave act of inconsequence and demonstrates that it was not worthy of victory and was thus unable to achieve it.[47]

What Clausewitz said at the end of Chapter 26 clearly contradicts the opening statements of the chapter: people's war *can* be militarily *and* politically effective on its own, and, if it takes place after a country has been defeated in the main battle, it is all that is left. Against his own word, Clausewitz did not leave the question of the political desirability of people's war to the philosophers. On the contrary, he stated that people's war was 'in the *natural order of the moral world*'.

A further reconstruction of the evolution of Clausewitz's argument will support the idea that people's war, far from taking on a more marginal position for the mature Clausewitz, became increasingly central to his thought after 1826 and 1827. Before we can proceed to that argument, we need to discuss the nature of Clausewitz's 'crisis' of 1826–7 and the extent to which the years 1827 to 1830 left Clausewitz time to revise the manuscript of *On War*.

Clausewitz left two notes with the manuscript of *On War*, one dated to 10 July 1827 and one undated. His wife, Marie, who with the help of Major Franz August O'Etzel and her brother Friedrich von Brühl edited and published the manuscript of *On War*, indicated in her preface that the undated note appeared to be from a very late stage, presumably from the second half of 1830, just before Carl stashed his manuscripts away and left Berlin for Breslau on 7 September 1830. Subsequent scholars have followed this dating, and

[47] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 805ff; bk. VI, ch. 26 (*On War*, 483).

Howard and Paret, in their edition of *On War*, date the undated note to 1830, even though the German edition by Hahlweg left the question of the date of the undated note unanswered.[48]

In the undated note, Clausewitz wrote:

> the manuscript on the conduct of major war that will be found upon my death can be regarded only as a collection of work components [*Werkstücke*] from which a theory of major war was to be developed. I am not satisfied with most of it, and the sixth book is to be regarded as a mere sketch. I would have completely revised it and would have sought a different solution.[49]

Clausewitz finished the note by saying that 'the first chapter of the first book is the only one that I regard as complete'.[50] Were the dating of the undated note to 1830 correct, this would mean that book I, Chapter 1, of *On War*, entitled 'What Is War?', is Clausewitz's legacy. This is a notion that Aron and Howard and Paret have supported.

The dating of the undated note to late 1830 has been comprehensively challenged. In a lengthy discussion of the relevance of the notes, Azar Gat has shown that the undated note was most likely written before the note dated 10 July 1827, in early 1827 or possibly even in the autumn of 1826.[51] Clausewitz had suffered from a particularly severe bout of ill health in 1826 and 1827, which was presumably why he felt compelled to write a note in which he referred to the possibility of his untimely death. The broader significance of the redating of the undated note is that this would suggest that Clausewitz had indeed had much more time to carry out the revisions envisaged in both notes in the entirety of the manuscript of *On War*. Beyond this central argument, Palmgren has also persuasively shown that the Chapter 1 of book I that Clausewitz referred to in the undated note was not, in fact, the chapter that would assume that place in the posthumous edition of *On War*. Rather, it was a draft chapter entitled 'Zweck des Krieges' ('The Purpose of War'), which is printed in Hahlweg's edition of Clausewitz's writings.[52]

The notes are also significant inasmuch as they grant us insights into the way in which Clausewitz reflected on his own intellectual development. In the undated note, Clausewitz explained that, while he had been writing book VI, he had stumbled upon a problem that he was unable to accommodate theoretically. The note from 10 July 1827 makes it clear that Clausewitz then thought that he had finally found a solution to that problem. The note states that Clausewitz intended to revise books I to VI along the lines of two main

[48] Clausewitz, 'Two Notes by the Author on his Plans for Revising *On War*', in *On War*, 70.
[49] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 181 (*On War*, 71).
[50] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 181 (*On War*, 71).
[51] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 257.
[52] Clausewitz, 'Zweck des Krieges', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 630ff. Cf. Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 250.

ideas: first, that war can be of two sorts, in that it aims either at 'overthrowing the enemy' or at the mere expansion of one's own territory through minor conquests. The second idea that was to provide a solution to Clausewitz's intellectual problem was that 'war is nothing more than the continuation of state policy [*Staatspolitik*] with other means'.[53]

While Clausewitz thus made it reasonably clear what solution he had found for the problem with which he was grappling, the question of precisely what this problem was is far more obscure. What was the reason for Clausewitz's intellectual crisis of 1826–7? As Gat notes, Clausewitz's crisis evolved from his realization that there were wars in which neither side had a positive aim.[54] Clausewitz confronted this problem in book VI, Chapter 30, entitled 'Defence of a Theatre of War When No Decision Is Being Sought'.[55] He began this chapter by pondering the phenomenon of wars in which 'neither of the two sides takes the position of the attack', which he then defined as a 'double-sided defence'.[56] It struck Clausewitz that this kind of war constituted the rule rather than the exception: 'campaigns of this kind are, if one considers the history of war of all times and countries, in such an overwhelming majority that the others appear like exceptions to the rule.'[57]

> The real case of war [*der wirkliche Fall des Krieges*] will mostly fall in between these two extremes, sometimes closer to this, sometimes closer to the other, and we can therefore see the practical consequence of this specificity in the modification, which through its counterweight is brought about in the absolute form of war.[58]

In Chapter 30 of book VI, Clausewitz hence sketched in a nutshell the new direction he intended to give his theory of war. First, war was of a dual nature, and the overwhelming majority of wars did not reach the severity of absolute war. In book VI, Clausewitz did not yet introduce a distinction between war in its pure, theoretical form—its 'absolute form'—and war in its empirical, historical, and hence modified form. Rather, in book VI the two types of war were of the same category, which was the prerequisite for imagining them as two poles of a spectrum. The notion of absolute war as a theoretical abstraction, with real war as the empirical and historical modification, which turned war into a 'half-thing', emerged only in its final shape in book VIII—and, even then, Clausewitz remained ambivalent about whether absolute war had not become 'real' in the context of Napoleonic warfare.[59] This demonstrates that the reason for Clausewitz's crisis of 1826 and 1827 was not so

[53] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 179 (*On War*, 69).
[54] Gat, *History of Military Thought*, 262.
[55] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 833; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 501ff).
[56] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 833; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 501).
[57] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 834; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 502).
[58] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 834; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 502).
[59] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 953; bk. VIII, ch. 2 (*On War*, 580).

much that he had detected an inherent tension in the theoretical and the historical aspects of his theory of war, as Aron has argued. Rather, it was his observations about how political intentions translated into strategic decisions regarding the roles of the offensive and the defensive.

The strength of the positive aim directly correlated to the 'political courage' of the attacker, or, in other words, his political circumstances.[60] Clausewitz wrote his study of the 1815 campaign, while at the same ploughing through his intellectual crisis, in 1826 and 1827.[61] The study of the 1815 campaign was the clearest explanation that Clausewitz ever gave about the impact of *Politik* on war—and vice versa.

> Every capital has a great strategic weight, but some more than others, and those will have greater weight that unify the notion of the capital in themselves more forcefully, and the one that is the hub of political parties/factions [politische Partheiungen] will have the greatest strategic weight. This was the case with Paris, and for this reason *Bonaparte* had to keep *Paris* at all costs; therefore his entire strategic planning revolved around this base.[62]

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the notion of 'politische Partheiungen' and their impact on war had entered Clausewitz's thought after the experience of the political dynamic in Prussia after 1817. This indicates that the years between 1817 and 1827 were by no means a time when Clausewitz did not consider *Politik* at all. The new accentuation of *Politik* after 1827 was, therefore, not so much a sudden revelation; rather, it was the result of a lengthy process during which Clausewitz reflected upon how *Politik itself* had changed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. To a certain extent, Clausewitz's intellectual crisis was triggered not so much by theoretical problems, but by the realization that his theory had to reflect the shifting parameters of *Politik* in order to be in some respect practical.

Napoleon's last mistake, which had sealed his fate—and the fate of Europe—had been first and foremost a political blunder. He had lost political support in Paris; yet he failed to wage his wars accordingly:

> In this situation Napoleon had to reject the role of the defender, the role of *Alexander of Russia*, as not suitable; he preferred to play that of *Alexander of Macedonia*, and therefore he decided to lead his chosen army and to entrust his fate upon the momentary intuitions of his talent through risky ventures, trusting his lucky star, rather than taking account of the profound circumstances about which he did not have a clean conscience.[63]

[60] Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 294.

[61] Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 314, most likely mistakenly dates the study of the campaign of 1815 to 1825; however, see Hahlweg, 'Vorbemerkung' to 'Feldzug von 1815', 937, who dates the study to 1827.

[62] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', 957; emphasis in original.

[63] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', 958; emphasis in original.

In the study of the 1815 campaign, Clausewitz referred back to observations that he had already made in his text on the 1812 campaign, written in 1823 or shortly thereafter.[64] In the early section of that text, Clausewitz had introduced for the first time the idea of a military victory that was not only fruitless but eventually self-defeating. This would occur in a situation in which 'the hostile army has already come so close to the boundaries of its operational radius [*Unternehmungskreis*] that it can no longer profit from a victory over our opposing forces'.[65] The Battle of Borodino proved this point. Clausewitz related how many observers were struck by the outcome of Borodino, while he himself saw in it 'a wholly natural course of events'.[66] Borodino had arguably tipped the scales to the disadvantage of the Russians, and this had been predictable, given that the French had superior numbers of troops in that encounter. But, crucially, Napoleon could not convert his military success at Borodino into a political one. One conclusion for Clausewitz was that the modern strategist had to let go of the idea of waging wars as battles:

> According to our point of view, the times are gone when one could regard a battle as an isolated act, in which victory was won in one push, through the coordination of all parts of the big machine. Maybe there never was such a time, but most theoretical concepts latched on to this idea.[67]

What, then, was the reason for Napoleon's ultimate defeat in Russia? It was, in Clausewitz's words, that, in Russia, Napoleon's winning formula had turned into a recipe for disaster:

> Bonaparte had intended to wage and end the war in Russia as he had waged and ended wars everywhere else. His approach was to start with decisive blows and to use the advantages thus accrued for new decisive blows, and thus to stake the gains repeatedly on one card, until he broke the bank.[68]

This approach had given Napoleon domination over large parts of Europe. Yet it had failed in two cases: in Spain, where his forces had got bogged down in a lengthy guerrilla war, and in Russia. In Russia, the reasons for Napoleon's defeat had been different from in Spain: while there had always been the threat of unleashing a popular insurrection against the Napoleonic forces, for Clausewitz, the decisive reason for Napoleon's defeat in Russia was the immense depth of the country and the implementation of what he called 'Vertilgungs-Krieg'—a scorched-earth policy carried out by the retreating Russian forces on

[64] Hahlweg, 'Vorbemerkung', 726.
[65] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 741.
[66] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 854.
[67] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 842.
[68] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 914.

their own territory.[69] What Napoleon's army was faced with in Russia was therefore not hostility by the local population in occupied territory but a vast land mass deserted of people and deprived of resources. Neither in Spain nor in Russia could Napoleon's forces live off the land, which had been their modus operandi elsewhere in Europe. That Napoleon found Moscow burning when he finally arrived there both epitomized and exacerbated the fact that he had led his army into a hopeless situation. Alexander I made no indications of suing for peace. The capital had fallen, but Napoleon could not reap the political fruits of his campaign.

From this, Clausewitz concluded that, if the attacking side could not convert military victories into political ones in a timely fashion (meaning before the winter, in the case of the Russian campaign of 1812), its success became self-defeating. This was the reason why attack was the weaker form of war:

> But now, and even more so in 1812, the offensive form of war was perceived as true arcana, because the attacking and advancing French had been the victors. But he who ponders this problem in depth will realize that attack is the weaker and defence is the stronger form of war, even though the former has a positive, and therefore greater and more decisive, purpose, whereas the latter has only a negative purpose; it is thus that things are balanced and that the coexistence of both forms becomes possible.[70]

In other words, if the attacking side could not muster a greater purpose and greater political and military energy in order to militate against the innate disadvantage of its form, no attack would ever have been successful and conquest would have been impossible. At the same time, what is implicit in this observation is that the attacking side is more liable to a sapping effect at the level of political support—and this observation again goes back to the 1815 study, even though it is implicit in the 1812 study: Napoleon had to heap victory upon victory in order to maintain political support in Paris. This requirement had forced him to gamble away his troops—in Russia, but even more so at Waterloo. He was trapped in a political logic that forced his hand strategically. This is why Clausewitz thought that Napoleon could not have waged war in Russia in any other way in 1812, even though Napoleon had clearly been demystified as the 'God of war' by the 1812 Russian campaign.

Napoleon's error had consisted in ignoring the *Kulminationspunkt*, the culminating point, of the attack, which Clausewitz pinpointed to the French

[69] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 916. It is interesting that, in his study of the 1812 campaign, Clausewitz made literally no mention of the efforts of popular resistance in Russia. This is all the more puzzling as he had been aware of them and mentioned that Napoleon's movements were constrained by the *Landmilitzen* (rural militias) everywhere in a letter to Gneisenau from 29 October/10 November 1812, dispatched from St Petersburg. In *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, ii/1. 139.

[70] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 818.

army's capture of Moscow in mid-September 1812. The Russian army and its leadership had not recognized the culminating point of the attack either; on the contrary, everyone at that point 'seemed to regard peace as both likely and desirable', with the possible exception of their supreme commander General Count Kutusov, who had previously declared himself victor of the Battle of Borodino.[71] But the point was that the Russian army did not even have to exploit Napoleon's precarious situation in order to tip the scales of defeat and victory—Napoleon had defeated himself. All that the Russian army had to do was to wait for the Napoleonic forces to start their withdrawal and to engage in vigorous pursuit.

The concept of the *Kulminationspunkt* encapsulated the modification in Clausewitz's thinking on the device of defence and attack. He went on to explore it further in his study of the 1814 campaign, written after the study of the 1812 campaign.[72] The concept was crucial, in that it enabled Clausewitz finally to come to terms with the reasons for the superiority of defence as the stronger form of war. This thought was, in itself, not new. In his *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804*, Clausewitz had considered defensive war as an important subject. Yet, the way in which the defensive side in war could ultimately defeat the attacker was only by reversing the roles of defence and attack by attacking the opponent. This was in line with various proclamations about the importance of the 'höchste Anstrengung der Kräfte', the 'utmost mobilization of all forces' in war.[73] The defending side could therefore not simply wait and suffer the attacker's blows; it had to go on the tactical offensive, and, once this had gathered momentum, it could attempt to reverse the roles. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the notion of the defensive as the stronger form of war had then gained additional importance in Clausewitz's intellectual universe during the reform years; however, in that context, it was a matter of political conviction rather than strategic theory.

During the reform years, Clausewitz's answer as to why defence was actually the stronger form of war was largely aspirational: because a great people, once unified, will rather risk its downfall than suffer the humiliation of political domination. In his 1812 text *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichts bei Sr Köngiglichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen*—written at the same time as the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift*, it should be noted—Clausewitz had attempted further to understand the lopsided dichotomy of defence and attack:

> Finally we have to consider with respect to the strategic defensive that, because it is in itself stronger than the offensive, its only task is to achieve the first great successes, and that, when this aim has been reached and peace does not

[71] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 871.
[72] Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 315.
[73] Clausewitz, *Strategie*, 52.

> immediately ensue, further successes can be achieved only through the offensive—since he who always remains on the defensive is bound to suffer the great disadvantage to have to continue to wage war at his own cost. Every state can endure this for a limited time only, and it would tire in the end and be defeated, were it to suffer its opponent's blows without ever pushing back.[74]

This is a paradoxical statement; inasmuch as Clausewitz proclaimed that defence is the stronger form of war, even though he had to concede that the configuration of conquest and occupation tends to favour the *attacker* in the long run. This was certainly true for Napoleon's campaigns up to 1812. Napoleon's example seemed to prove that the strategic defensive was actually the *weaker* form of war, because it had to extract resources needed for war from an ever-shrinking territory, whereas the attacker gained with each conquest in terms of his resource base. It was only when the roles of attack and defence were reversed that the strength of the defensive-turned-attack could assert itself. The argument is to a large extent tautological, and shows that, in 1812, Clausewitz had not yet acquired a firm theoretical grip on this problem, even though politically it was highly desirable to uphold the defensive as the stronger form of war. The requirement of a miraculous turning point echoes the notion of the 'current of events', which suddenly turns against the attacker so that the latter is 'shattered like a small skiff in the waves of the furious sea'.[75] In these early writings, the idea of a turning point in the events of war had already emerged, but Clausewitz offered no explanation of when or why this turning point could be reached. Possibly he thought that none was necessary, as both defence as a stronger form of war and the idea that an attack would inevitably run out of steam, at which point the fortunes of war would shift, had already been introduced—by none other than Clausewitz's intellectual arch-opponent Adam Heinrich von Bülow.[76]

In a draft chapter of *On War*, written in 1823–4, Clausewitz returned to the idea that the relationship between defence and attack was not a zero-sum game. One side's gains will not exactly translate into the other side's losses and vice versa: 'We can see that our advantage will always be the disadvantage of our opponent; however, it is not always the one that we seek or need, and this in itself makes it evident that this rule cannot be general.'[77] Again, why that was the case remained unclear. In some passages of *On War*, Clausewitz

[74] Clausewitz, 'Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichts bei Sr Königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen', in *Vom Kriege*, 1078.

[75] Clausewitz, 'Bekenntnisdenkschrift', i. 733.

[76] Adam Heinrich von Bülow, *Geist des neuern Kriegssystems, hergeleitet aus dem Grundsatze einer Basis der Operationen, auch für Laien in der Kriegskunst fasslich vorgetragen von einem ehemaligen Preussischen Offizier* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1799), 190ff; cf. Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 91.

[77] Clausewitz, '5tes Kapitel: Polarität der gegenseitigen Absichten im Kriege', in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften—Aufsätze—Studien—Briefe*, ed. Hahlweg, *Schriften*, ii/2. 662.

postulated that the advantage of defence resulted from the fact that the attacker was more prone to the effects of *Ermüdung*, fatigue or exhaustion, than the defender.[78] This presents a slight difference from his 1812 assumption that the attacker had the material advantage of newly acquired territory to hand; however, it was still a tautological explanation, in that Clausewitz attributed the phenomenon that was to be explained—the greater rate of attrition on the side of the attack—to the manifestation of the phenomenon itself: *Ermüdung*.

It is possible that the unsatisfactory reasoning behind the concept of the superiority of defence as it was reflected in the draft chapter of 1823–4 had prompted Clausewitz to turn to studying Napoleon's 1812 campaign, which Clausewitz began around 1823 or shortly thereafter. The notion of *Ermüdung* still featured in the study. Clausewitz remarked on the Battle of Borodino that 'it has always been memorable to me how it [the battle] increasingly displayed the character of *Ermüdung* and exhaustion [*Erschöpfung*]'.[79] But Borodino did not decide anything, and it was not the turning point towards French defeat. The reasons for the subsequent defeat lay outside the Battle of Borodino, and *Ermüdung* was their effect rather than their cause. The insertion of the concept of the *Kulminationspunkt* was, therefore, highly significant, in that it enabled Clausewitz to devise a viable and substantial explanation for the superiority of defence as the stronger form of war.

The final step to complete the theoretical analysis of the superiority of defence consisted, as already indicated, in Clausewitz's study of the 1815 campaign. Clausewitz had already indicated in the study of the 1812 campaign that the *Kulminationspunkt* was intricately interwoven with political dynamics. No longer did he think that the tilting of the scales between defence and attack occurred when the defender went on the counter-attack. All that was necessary was to deny the attacker the possibility to convert military success into political success. The reaching of the *Kulminationspunkt* was ultimately politically conditioned: Napoleon had to advance militarily in order to secure continued political support in Paris; however, to the extent that he became increasingly a slave to this logic, political success could be denied to him by the simple refusal of Alexander I to sue for peace. The same logic applied to the 1815 campaign: once again Napoleon was forced to bet all on one card in Waterloo. Victory in battle was his only possibility to secure his political future. Once again, he lost, and his downfall was final.[80]

[78] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 221; bk. I, ch. 2 (*On War*, 94).

[79] Clausewitz, 'Der Russische Feldzug von 1812', 850.

[80] Andreas Herberg-Rothe, whose analysis of Clausewitz's historical writings I have largely followed so far, argues that, for Clausewitz, the lesson of 1812 was the importance of political factors in war, whereas the lesson of Waterloo was to emphasize the importance of limiting war so as to prevent the complete destruction of one's forces. I am not fully convinced that there is such a neat distinction between the studies of the 1812 and the 1815 campaigns. The emphasis of

In Chapter 30 of book VI of *On War*, Clausewitz developed a new perspective on the lopsided polarity of defence and attack. He introduced the concept of 'strategic manoeuvring'—a situation that emerged when neither the attacker nor the defender had a strong aim and the polarity that is at the heart of the device of defence and attack reached equilibrium. This was a situation, in Clausewitz's words, 'where the conditions or the political intentions do not allow for a big decision'.[81] Clausewitz explained further that 'this kind of war will never cease to be a game'.[82] It is therefore the true realm of the general, 'the trial of the skills of the two opposing *Feldherren*'.[83] The introduction of the concept of 'strategic manoeuvring' was important inasmuch as it foreshadowed the distinction between absolute and real war, which Clausewitz fully developed in book VIII. In line with the historical overview of how war had been waged in Europe since the Middle Ages in book VIII, Chapter 3B, Clausewitz used eighteenth-century examples, most notably the wars of Frederick the Great, to illustrate this configuration. In this context, Clausewitz presented Frederick the Great as the paradigmatic antagonist to Napoleon: whereas the latter had sealed his own fate by pushing beyond the culminating point of victory, the former had mostly been careful to secure the gains of the offensive by turning to a defensive stance and to seek a political settlement with the military capital he had gained.[84]

In book VIII, Chapter 8, of *On War*, Clausewitz returned to the issue of *Ermüdung* on the part of the attacking side. If the defending side is very weak, it can only hope to hold out until the attacker suffers exhaustion. But, in that case, the turning point between attack and defence will not automatically be reached. Its occurrence hinges upon the 'improvement of political circumstances' outside the military confrontation, such as a change in alliances. Clausewitz's new insight is that *Ermüdung* alone cannot induce the culminating point of the attack.[85] At the same time, Clausewitz suggested, this seemed to contradict the theoretical concept of defence as the stronger form of war. 'According to this [theoretical] notion, it [defence] is the stronger form of war and, as a result of that strength, can also be employed when we envisage a more or less forceful pushback.'[86] In order to resolve this apparent gap between the theoretical postulate of defence as the stronger form of war and

the 1815 study is still on the role of politics/policy—in an even clearer form than in the 1812 study. When Clausewitz took up the notion of limited war in book VI, Chapter 30, however, he referred mostly to eighteenth-century examples—see later in this chapter. Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle*, 15ff.

[81] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 853; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 513).
[82] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 854; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 514).
[83] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 853; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 513).
[84] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 853; bk. VI, ch. 30 (*On War*, 513).
[85] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1004; bk. VIII, ch. 8 (*On War*, 613).
[86] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1004; bk. VIII, ch. 8 (*On War*, 614).

the reality of war as a 'half-thing' in which even a passive defence is often enough to achieve some sort of peace agreement, he pondered two ways in which the defender could go about the task of defending his country. The first was what we may call a 'perimeter defence': 'In the first case, the defender seeks to possess his country and to keep it intact for as long as he can, since this allows him to gain the maximum amount of time, and gaining time is the only way to reach the aim.'[87] The second form of defence that Clausewitz considered is something that the late-modern military vocabulary would describe as a 'defence in depth': 'In the second case, in which the defender is already imbued with a positive intention, it [defence] also acquires a positive character, and this [positive character] increases the greater the pushback that the situation allows for.'[88]

Clausewitz was not agnostic about which option he preferred. The retreat into one's own territory *before* a decisive battle had taken place was the option that could lure the opponent into extending his operations beyond the culminating point of victory. The enemy would be defeated not so much through defensive battle as through his own efforts. If battle became inevitable, the opponent would at least have been significantly weakened.[89] On the face of it, this seemed to contravene the requirement of the concentration of one's forces in space and time; Clausewitz argued that a country's 'immovable resources', such as its fortifications and its sheer land mass that had to be occupied and secured and its distances that had to be travelled, coalesced in these circumstances to induce strategic consumption in the attacker.[90]

The crucial question is what role people's war played in this scenario and, conversely, where Napoleon's ill-fated 1812 campaign in Russia fits into this picture. As we have seen, Clausewitz's study of the 1812 campaign allowed him to develop the concept of the culminating point of the attack and thus to reformulate the device of defence and attack. But, in that campaign, people's war barely played a role—at least in Clausewitz's presentation of it. In book VI, Chapter 25, Clausewitz discussed the conditions in which a retreat into one's own territory is a feasible defensive strategy. He emphasized that 'a vast territory or at least a long line of retreat is the main and basic requirement'. Herein lies the problem, because 'no other European country has the same dimensions as Russia; and only very few offer lines of retreat that are 100 miles long'.[91] People's war, as Clausewitz made clear, can be part of the retreat into the interior of the country, but he did not elaborate on this in Chapter 25 of book VI, because he covered it in the subsequent chapter.[92] There, he specified

[87] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1004; bk. VIII, ch. 8 (*On War*, 614).
[88] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1005; bk. VIII, ch. 8 (*On War*, 614).
[89] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 784; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 469).
[90] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 830; bk. VI, ch. 29 (*On War*, 500).
[91] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 788; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 471).
[92] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 791; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 473).

under what circumstances people's war promised success: 'Specific territorial features that enhance the effectiveness of people's war are a scattered structure of settlements, as we find it in many German provinces.'[93] German provinces, of course, lacked the strategic depth that Russia offered. What Clausewitz argued is that, where a country lacks the strategic depth required for a straightforward retreat into the interior—and that applied to almost all European countries apart from Russia—people's war could compensate for the lack of territory by increasing the efforts that the attacker has to devote to controlling conquered provinces and to protecting his lines of communication. In those circumstances, the need for billeting and requisitioning only exacerbated the attacker's vulnerability, because it fostered popular resistance and exposed the attacker to constant encounters with the local population.[94]

The temporal dimension is extremely important in this context: not only is the defending side in a position to harness either or both the immovable resources of space and, potentially, its own people into its strategic efforts; it can also decide how to use them and when to unleash them:

> the defender, through his sacrifice of territory, acquires the right to dictate [the course of events], constantly *to give the rule to the other side*. [...] The right *to give the rule to the enemy*, makes a difference for gaining time and energy and various subordinate advantages, which in the long run become essential.[95]

In other words, the defending side owns the strategic initiative. If it is in a position to unleash a popular insurrection against the invader, it also possesses what in cold-war parlance we would term 'escalation dominance': it decides when and to what level to gear up the pace of the events. This does not mean that the people have to or will be mobilized in every single defensive war. Empirically, most of the time a popular insurrection will be the last resort. Yet, the mere threat of unleashing a people's war gives the defender additional room for manoeuvre and confronts the attacker with a strategic dilemma: how to enlarge his 'sphere of victory' without at the same time increasing his vulnerability and thus relinquishing the strategic initiative to the defender.

Hence, in 1826–7, Clausewitz came to terms with a problem that had been at the heart of his theory of war since its emergence: the reason for the superiority of defence as the stronger form of war. Clausewitz had always

[93] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 801; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 480).

[94] Clausewitz has been criticized for largely ignoring logistics as a factor in war and strategy; cf. Avi Kober, 'Clausewitz and 21st Century Israeli Military Thinking and Practice', in *Clausewitz Goes Global: Carl von Clausewitz in the 21st Century*, ed. Reiner Pommerin (Berlin: Miles, 2014), 164. Yet, in the context of the reformulated device, logistics were crucial to his argument; cf. Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 786; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 470); *Vom Kriege*, 802; bk. VI, ch. 26 (*On War*, 481).

[95] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 791; bk. VI, ch. 25 (*On War*, 473); emphasis added. The phrasing 'to give the rule to the enemy' parallels the Kantian notion of genius as he who 'gives the rule to art'. Cf. p. 000.

believed that victory in war was not a zero-sum game. But, before 1826–7, his approach to making this argument remained unclear and fuzzy: moral forces and friction made war impossible to calculate, the attacker would suffer exhaustion, and at some point the defending side could switch to the counter-attack. After 1826–7, Clausewitz had a far more precise understanding of what made defence the stronger form of war: the retreat into the interior of the country and the credible threat of people's war.

Clausewitz's insights into how the parameters of *Politik* had shifted during his lifetime played a key role in this development. The advantage of defence and the disadvantage of attack were ultimately of a political nature. The attacking side might be able to extract resources from conquered territory, but this would only serve to exacerbate the *political* problem of people's war. At the same time, owing to the emergence of adversarial political systems across Europe, the attacking side was under increasing political pressure for relentless military success. 'Adversarial' did not in every case mean the introduction of a parliamentary system, although Clausewitz thought that party political systems increased the political vulnerability of the attacking side.[96] But, even in Prussia after 1815, a sphere of public discourse had emerged that pitted political positions against one another. Although the ruling elite attempted to rein in the extremes, in particular the liberal ones, with the help of censorship, a political polarization had occurred that could become manifest at any time. Strategy-making in these circumstances demanded support from at least important parts of public opinion, and setbacks could undermine that support. The attack was under pressure from *Politik* from both without and within, whereas the defending side could expect the experience of a joint external foe to have a unifying effect on its people.

The inclusion of *Politik* into Clausewitz's thinking on war via the systematic integration of people's war in his theory of major war also had consequences for his perspective on the notion of probability.[97] As we have seen in Chapter 3, Clausewitz held a rather negative view of the idea of probability in his writings from the reform years. This made sense in that context: as he was not sure how people's war could succeed in fending off the Napoleonic occupation forces, all he could do was to demonstrate that it was possible to start a popular insurrection and then to hope for a rapid shift in the strategic context. Pointing out that this was a fairly remote possibility was, in Clausewitz's eyes, at worst defeatist and at best a lame excuse for staying inactive. After 1826–7, as Clausewitz had gained a better understanding of why people's

[96] Clausewitz, 'Feldzug von 1815', 957.

[97] On Clausewitz's notion of chance and probability, see also Anders Engerberg-Pederson, *Empire of Chance: The Napoleonic Wars and the Disorder of Things* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 64ff, who, however, misses the evolution in Clausewitz's thought on chance and probability.

war was often likely to succeed, he also re-evaluated the notion of probability: if the forces that limit or delimit war had been identified, they could be analysed, even if an exact calculation was not possible. In this new theoretical context, the concept of probability could be helpful:

> 5. The proportionately larger degree of resistance triggered in the enemy. Sometimes the enemy drops his weapons in shock and paralysis, another time he is shaken by a violent paroxysm, everyone rushes to arms and the resistance after the first defeat is greater than before. The character of the people and the government, the nature of the country and its political relations are the data from which one has to guess the probable.[98]

The notion of probability, now seen in a positive light, also helped Clausewitz to construct a theoretical bridge between the dual nature of war, which, by the time of drafting book VIII, was split between absolute war as an abstraction and real war as its empirical manifestation.

> If we have to admit that war does not emanate from and is moulded by a finite calculation of innumerable circumstances, which it touches upon, but rather is impacted upon only by those individual ones [of the circumstances] that dominate at the time, then it follows inherently that it [war] is based upon a play of possibilities, probabilities, luck, and bad luck, in the course of which strict logical inference gets lost, and where it [strict logical inference] is a very cumbersome and uncomfortable instrument of the head/mind; it also follows, then, that war can be a thing that is, sometimes less, sometimes more, war.[99]

The result is simple:

> Thus, theory demands that every war is first understood regarding its character and its broad outlines according to the *probability that the political forces and conditions indicate*. The closer a war is in terms of its character to absolute war according to this determination, the larger the mass of all warring states that are involved and drawn into it, the clearer will be the connection between its events, and the more necessary it will be not to take the first step without having thought the last.[100]

And this is precisely why the general has to double up as a statesman, as Clausewitz had demanded in Chapter 1 of book I. The 'play of probability and chance' was 'mainly' the realm of the general, as Clausewitz had made clear in the trinity. This was exactly why, ideally, the general as military genius was equipped with a superior integration of all his faculties, because logic was not a good instrument for gauging probability. Probability could become 'truth' if

[98] Clausewitz, 'Über den Kulminationspunkt des Sieges', *Vom Kriege*, 940; bk. VII, unnumbered chapter (*On War*, 569).
[99] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 954ff; bk. VIII, ch. 2 (*On War*, 581).
[100] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 959; bk. VIII, ch. 3A (*On War*, 584); emphasis added.

and when the general could 'feel it out'. War and *Politik* had become intricately interlinked since the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars. While Clausewitz in the 1820s did not expect a return to the all-encompassing national mobilization of the 1790s and the 1800s and 1810s, he did not place too much hope in the return of eighteenth-century-style cabinet wars. Wars could, in the future too, be waged as cabinet wars, but the possibility of people's war had become an ingredient even in limited wars: the limits of eighteenth-century wars had been imposed 'by the sheer ignorance of what was possible', and, once they had been torn down, they were unlikely to be re-erected.[101]

Clausewitz had always, from his very first writings to his mature years, had a concept of the 'absolute'. Indeed, it would have been surprising had he not used the term, given how central it was to both Romanticism and German Idealism. In his letter to Fichte from 1809, he had referred to people's war as 'the most beautiful of wars' and as war in its 'most perfect form'.[102] In line with both Romanticist and Idealist thought, this term had strong aesthetic and political underpinnings. But it emerged at a time of supreme crisis and was thought of as an exceptional measure. After 1826–7, Clausewitz integrated people's war systematically into his theory of major war. People's war still belonged to the context of absolute war, but it had become a potential threat even in those wars that started as limited wars. He still thought that a national mobilization for offensive purposes would constitute a case of war that edged very close to war in its purest form. But a defensive people's war had become a possibility in every war, and this new development was due to the changing political conditions in Europe after 1812. Inasmuch as defensive people's war was an option in every war, it had become part of real war. Its effect on the nature of war and strategy, however, was ambivalent. On the one hand, it had the capacity to escalate war and to lead to revolutionary upheavals. Clausewitz's admission in book VIII of *On War* that the genie of people's war was unlikely to be relegated to its bottle is further indication that book VIII was written at a very late stage in Clausewitz's life, most likely in 1830, the year of revolutions and political unrest in Europe.

On the other hand, because both the attacker and the defender were aware of the escalatory potential of people's war, it could limit war and work towards the maintenance of the status quo. This was clearly the hope that Clausewitz expressed in his writings on the Polish question of 1831.[103] Towards the end of his life, just as in his youth, therefore, Clausewitz defended people's war—for political reasons. He confirmed the deterrent function of people's war in what was the last text that he wrote before his death:

[101] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 973; bk. VIII, ch. 3B (*On War*, 593).
[102] Cf. Chapter 3. [103] Cf. Chapter 4.

> European powers are by no means indifferent to this position of defence, since it has to attract the opinion of all sane minds and immaculate hearts, both among their own populations and among those of the opponent, and a war such as the one that is to be expected in this case cannot be waged with the resources of cabinets alone, but has to rely on the hearts of the people.[104]

CONCLUSION

The systematic integration of people's war into his theory of major war, the reformulation of the device of defence and attack with the help of the concept of the *Kulminationspunkt*, and the closer interweaving of war and *Politik* were all simultaneous and interlocking intellectual moves that Clausewitz made in 1826 and 1827. This development did not come out of nowhere. Clausewitz had always held that moral forces were decisive in war and strategy; the problem was that they could not be easily calculated. 'Scientific' theories of war, such as von Bülow's, therefore made little sense. In his earlier writings, from the lectures on small war onwards, Clausewitz had thus insisted that the qualities of the military commander could not be reduced to an analytic intellect. The need to process information quickly and comprehensively and to act accordingly required a rounded and balanced mind that could draw upon reason *and* emotions and passion. There are remnants of this in *On War*, in particular in book I, Chapter 3, on 'Military Genius', in which Clausewitz referred to *coup d'oeil*, an eighteenth-century concept that had already played a role in the lectures on small war. The integration of reason and emotions never lost its significance for Clausewitz, as evidenced by the central place it was given in the famous trinity in book I, Chapter 1, of *On War*.

Yet the way in which the integration of reason and passion worked in practice was subject to changes and revisions in Clausewitz's intellectual development. The realization that the reason why defence was the stronger form of war was, effectively, a function of political circumstances seemed to make the factors that impacted on war more accessible to analysis, even though such analysis was still far from an exact science. In this context, Clausewitz reformulated his insistence on the integration of reason and emotions as the ability to 'feel out the truth' when confronted with a staggering amount of data. This was the task of the general, who had to double up as a 'statesman', since the chief factors that impacted on war were political.

Clausewitz's revision of his theory of war that occurred in 1826 and 1827 was not primarily precipitated by his desire to integrate theory and history into a universal theory of war, as has often been argued. In book VI, drafted at

[104] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 236.

the time of his 'crisis', the concepts that he used are that of the rule and the exception. He did not yet equate absolute war with an abstraction and real war with the empirical manifestation. If this shift of understanding ever occurred, then it did so only at a later stage, when he drafted book VIII of *On War*, and even in that context it remained ambivalent and incomplete, as absolute war in the form of people's war remained a constant possibility. The chapter has followed Palmgren in arguing that it was an inconsistency in the device of defence and attack that prompted Clausewitz to rethink his theory of war. At the same time, it has gone beyond Palmgren's analysis by demonstrating that Clausewitz solved this intellectual inconsistency by systematically integrating people's war into his theory of major war. People's war and the threat of people's war were what made defence the stronger form of war—a conviction that Clausewitz—following Bülow—had always held, but was able to explain only after 1826–7.

The systematic integration of people's war into Clausewitz's theory of war led to the idea—or at least the hope—that, if both attacker and defender know about this lopsided polarity, the threat of people's war would act as a deterrent to maintain the European balance of power. Deterrence, even though Clausewitz never used the term, was thus his answer to theories of perpetual peace: perpetual peace had not been achieved on the basis of the rational calculation that war was ultimately fruitless. In contrast, deterrence, based on the possibility of converting the passion of the people into an effort of collective resistance, and understood through a mixture of rational analysis and the ability to 'feel out' the currents of political dynamics, was more promising as a custodian of the European balance of power. Yet, this required a renewed drive towards democratization—a return to the 'attitude and emotion of 1813'.[105] With the completion of *On War*, domestically people's war had lost nothing of its emancipatory potential of the reform years, even though it had, in the context of foreign policy, turned into an instrument for safeguarding the status quo in Europe.

[105] Clausewitz, 'Gesamtexistenz', 237.

6

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to reconstruct Clausewitz's theory of war by placing the historical figure of Clausewitz and his intellectual development into his historical context. Four overlapping strands of intellectual engagement were particularly relevant in this respect. First, Clausewitz as a student and teacher of small war at the Berlin *Kriegsschule* from 1810 to 1812. In this context, Clausewitz showed himself to be an avid reader of eighteenth-century tactical manuals on small war understood as partisan warfare. However, going beyond the eighteenth-century tradition of *petite guerre* manuals, Clausewitz extrapolated from the tactical ideal of the small-war fighter the military, anthropological, and ethical ideal of a new type of fighter, who could draw upon all his faculties, intellectual and sensual, to understand and act. This strand of thought would recur in the emphatically political writings from the reform years in the sense of a new political and social type of man. In *On War*, Clausewitz also returned to his expertise and thinking about partisan warfare, in particular when he revisited the notion of *coup d'oeil* in Chapter 3 of book I, on 'Military Genius'. In this context, the harmonious integration of reason and emotions enabled the general to stretch his cognitive and reactive faculties to the level of the statesman.

The second strand in Clausewitz's intellectual development was the writings from the reform years. In parallel to his increasingly focused study of small war in the years 1810–12, Clausewitz drafted the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* and other memoranda on the possibility of a popular insurrection against Napoleon's occupation. This strand in Clausewitz's writings was most clearly engaging with the Romanticist and Idealist currents of his lifetime. As Chapter 3 has shown, Clausewitz had the occasion personally to meet central figures such as August Wilhelm Schlegel and Fichte. The *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* and Clausewitz's 1809 letter to Fichte, when reconstructed in the vibrant intellectual context of contemporary Berlin, reflect the extent to which Clausewitz's thinking went to the heart of political discussions of his time: the obsession with the idea of 'perpetual peace' and the question of how to reform a state and a society without letting them descend into chaos and anarchy. These texts interweave epistemological questions with anthropological,

political, social, moral, and, last but not least, tactical problems. Notions such as 'the most beautiful of wars', which Clausewitz used to describe a defensive people's war, hint at the extent to which Clausewitz was linked into the philosophical and political debates of the reform years. The writings from the reform years are crucial, in that, in them, Clausewitz forged his understanding of the integration of reason and emotions/passion, which would be path-breaking for the rest of his oeuvre. At the same time, the writings from the reform years were a stage in Clausewitz's intellectual development that he had to overcome in order to work through his crisis of 1826–7. In the writings from the reform years, people's war is an exceptional measure in the face of an exceptional situation: Napoleon's unprecedented (in modern times) expansion across Europe. Clausewitz hoped that people's war could be strategically decisive in this context; however, he had no clear idea as to whether this was true or how the success of people's war was to materialize. This is why his study of the eighteenth-century small-war tradition was so central: in the absence of military histories of people's war, eighteenth-century small war was the most comparable subject. After 1826–7, reflecting on Napoleon's historical demise from 1812 to 1815, Clausewitz was much more certain that the defensive was the stronger form of war. Arguably, he had devised his notion on the culminating point of the attack with a view to Napoleon's 1812 Russian campaign, but Clausewitz was always clear about the fact that Russia was a special case, owing to its supreme geographical depth. The rest of Europe, however, could not hope to let sheer distances work in its states' their favour. For these states, the strength of the defensive hinged upon the feasibility and likely success of people's war. People's war was the baseline of the strategic defensive—it was the reason why defence was the stronger form of war, in particular after the realization towards the end of the 1820s that the restoration had not achieved a return to eighteenth-century cabinet wars in which popular emotions played no role. In Clausewitz's mature oeuvre, people's war is an ambivalent concept: it can lend legitimacy to revolutionary upheavals, but at the same time it can act as the guarantor of the status quo in the European balance of power.

The third strand in Clausewitz's intellectual development was the years between 1815 and 1826. Clausewitz's post-1815 political writings have not received much attention in the Clausewitz scholarship, partly because they were left in draft and are hence often somewhat obscure, such as *Umtriebe*. Yet, as Chapter 4 has shown, they are significant, since they reflect Clausewitz's analysis of the political changes of his lifetime. He was clearly puzzled by the fact that, while public political enthusiasm—patriotism—had been lacking in Prussia before 1812, the years 1817–19 in particular saw an upsurge in demonstrations of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'—at a time when Germany's citizens could have retired into their private lives. This observation made

Clausewitz wary of an excessive polarization and politicization of society. While atomism and utilitarian egotism had been the source of Prussia's political decadence until 1813, in 1817–19, the breakdown of established societal structures and the concomitant emergence of political factions—*Partheyentum*—were Clausewitz's great worries. Clausewitz, as a former core member of the reform movement and someone who was suspected of 'Jacobinism' by members of the Prussian court, was an actor in this process. He himself fell victim to frenzied intrigues aimed at preventing reform-minded persons from acquiring important state offices when he attempted to be nominated Prussian's ambassador to London. At the same time, Clausewitz remained a keen observer in the process. The insights he gained about the increasing impact of public opinion and volatile democratic processes on war had most likely an impact on his analysis of Napoleon's demise between 1812 and 1815. This analysis, in turn, allowed him to reframe his theory of war after 1826–7 and to identify political aspects as the core factors that should be studied in order to 'feel out the truth' about the nature of a specific war.

Clausewitz had begun drafting his 'theory of major war' in 1816. In his 'small volume', a pre-study of *On War* that he worked on between 1817 and 1823–4, the superiority of the defensive as the stronger form of war was conceptualized as a factor that worked against the warlike element, which was itself conceptualized as the concentrated unleashing of one's forces for the purpose of annihilating the opponent's forces.[1] In other words, the superiority of the defensive had not yet been fully integrated into Clausewitz's theory of war—it had remained an outside factor. This changed in 1826–7, when Clausewitz fully integrated the option of defensive people's war into his theory of major war. People's war had been normalized, both in Clausewitz's lifetime and in his theoretical reflections, even though it never lost its ambivalence as a potential force for change and revolutionary upheaval as well as a force for continuity. People's war remained loosely tied to the concept of 'absolute war', just as much as Clausewitz never fully relegated absolute war to the realm of abstraction. Indeed, in order to work as a credible deterrent, people's war had to imply the potential of absolute war. At the same time, people's war became fully integrated into Clausewitz's theory of major war. It was the baseline of an implicit concept of deterrence that was intended to militate against future expansionist foreign policies within Europe. Both Clausewitz's political observations and his historical studies after 1815 had convinced him that, first, European populations in the 1820s could be more easily mobilized against an outside invasion or occupation, and, secondly, that any aggressor would be under increased public political scrutiny, which could severely limit his room for manoeuvre in the event of setbacks on the battlefield (or during the occupation).

[1] Palmgren, 'Visions of Strategy', 201ff.

DYNAMICS OF ENGAGEMENT

Against the backdrop of this brief summary of Clausewitz's intellectual development, three dynamics in the way in which he engaged with his intellectual context stand out. First, he often quite clearly positioned himself as an avant-garde strategic thinker who ruthlessly challenged established wisdom. This comes close to Harold Bloom's concept of the 'anxiety of influence': the deliberate attempt by poets and intellectuals to break with tradition, the refusal to stand on anyone's shoulders. Indeed, Clausewitz's 'anxiety of influence' is almost palpable in the way in which he distanced himself over and over again from the mechanical and mathematical ideas of von Bülow, while keeping quiet about the myriad of ideas and concepts that he actually borrowed from von Bülow and then developed further, such as the significance of operating on inner lines, defence as the stronger form of war, and the idea of a *Kulminationspunkt*. The fact that Clausewitz referenced some influences in a positive light should not distract from the fact that he saw himself as an intellectual innovator rather than an epigone. He praised Machiavelli as a counterweight to the overwhelming influence of the 'philosophers of perpetual peace' of his time, but he also criticized Machiavelli for his misguided advice on domestic politics. He mentioned Montesquieu, with whom he shared some historicist positions, but the intellectual link to Herder, whom he never mentioned, is more plausible, given the extent to which August Wilhelm Schlegel and Mme de Staël were influenced by Herder.

The second way in which Clausewitz immersed himself in the intellectual debates of his time was more characterized by the dynamic of an open-ended exchange rather than a firm denunciation of tradition. This applied in particular to his writings from the reform years. Just as his contemporaries, Clausewitz is grappling with the question of how to encourage political and societal reforms without giving way to anarchy and terror. The answers he gave, which centred around the institution of the *Landwehr*, were original, but they clearly engaged with concepts that were already established: education as a prerequisite for emancipation, the dilemma that arose from this requirement in terms of what was to come first, the diagnosis of an all-embracing political decadence in Prussia before 1813 and the Humanist ideal of the integration of all human faculties into the emergence of a new human being. Schiller, Fichte, Goethe, Novalis, and von Humboldt all had contributed to this debate, and Clausewitz must have been to some degree exposed to it.

The third dynamic through which Clausewitz engaged with his intellectual environment was through the process of 'borrowing' concepts and terms and reusing them in his own theory. Notable examples in this respect were the notions of the 'absolute', 'probability', 'genius', and 'chance', which were common currency in his lifetime. But the dynamic of borrowing, of course, also applied to Clausewitz's appropriation of concepts from von Bülow. This

dynamic is characterized by Clausewitz's creative use of these concepts. The example of the notion of 'probability' is instructive in this respect. While Clausewitz had not many positive things to say about probability in his writings from the reform years, he returned to the notion in later drafts of *On War*, where he presented it in a much more positive light (a move enabled by the closer integration of political factors into his theory of war). In a way, Clausewitz was probably partly guilty of latching onto what we would call 'buzzwords' in today's parlance, even though he often gave them an innovative and original meaning.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN CLAUSEWITZ'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The existing Clausewitz scholarship presents two hypotheses about change in Clausewitz's intellectual development: the first, put forward by Paret and others, posits that the writing of *On War* was a fairly continuous process, while Clausewitz's political and personal development was characterized by the evolution from youthful reformer to mature 'r/Realist'. The dating of the undated note plays a role in this context, in so far as Paret assumes that Clausewitz wrote this note shortly before his death rather than in 1827, so that the two notes jointly point not to a rupture in Clausewitz's thinking, but to a constant process of self-critique and self-doubt throughout the last three years of his life. At the same time, Paret argues that Clausewitz became politically increasingly disillusioned and more 'Machiavellian' in his mature years. The other hypothesis is that of Beatrice Heuser, who holds that 1827 represents a critical rupture in Clausewitz's thought, the sudden realization that war itself was subordinate to politics.

Anders Palmgren challenged both of these hypotheses by showing how Clausewitz's 'crisis' of 1826 and 1827 was the culmination of a long thought process, in which he readjusted elements of his theory in order to solve the problem that he had encountered regarding the device of defence and attack. While Palmgren's work is path-breaking in the way in which it presents a framework for understanding Clausewitz's intellectual development, it largely ignores the political questions that were simmering underneath the strategic concepts that Clausewitz was devising. The chapters of this book have demonstrated how deeply interwoven Clausewitz's tactical, strategic, political, historical, anthropological, and moral thought was.

If there is a rupture in Clausewitz's thought, it is epitomized in the contrast between his 1812 statement in the *Bekenntnisdenkschrift* that the disadvantage of the defensive is a political, not a military one, on the one hand, and book VIII

of *On War*, where Clausewitz flipped this argument on its head and held that the advantage of the defensive lies in the realm of *Politik*. People's war had become fully integrated into his theory of major war, as a baseline threat of escalation that was credible and caused an undeniable advantage to the defending side. This change in the estimation of the specific dynamics of the defensive was at the heart of Clausewitz's intellectual evolution. It is arguably hard to detect in *On War*, because Clausewitz was careful not to mention people's war directly except in Chapter 26 of book VI of *On War*. Clausewitz was not someone who eagerly published during his lifetime, but he himself regarded *On War* as his magnum opus. It was written for a Prussian audience, and if it had not passed censorship after his death, his lifework would have been lost.

At the same time, this change reflected the evolution of *Politik* in Clausewitz's lifetime. The lasting legacy of the French Revolution and the era of the Napoleonic Empire was the realization that the state had gained immense power by mobilizing its entire population. The state itself had changed significantly in the process: it underwent a transformation from the dynastic, absolute state to the national state, even though this development was uneven and non-linear, and the boundaries of the 'nation' in question were often unclear and fuzzy, as was the case with Prussia and Germany. The political restoration after the 1815 Vienna Congress intended to reconstruct the status quo ante and to reverse the transformation of the European state. It did succeed inasmuch as it reinstated the European state system that had been taken apart by Napoleon's empire. However, what it clearly had not achieved was to put the genie of 'nationalism' and popular mobilization for war back into the bottle. People's war had undeniably been a force for good in the framework of the wars of liberation. The intellectual currents and countercurrents of Clausewitz's lifetime had focused on liberation—liberation from foreign domination, but also liberation from *ancien régime* institutions *and* from Enlightenment rationalism. Even though the *Ultras* did their best to rein in progressive discourses with the help of censorship and a general suspicion towards all intellectuals, it was impossible to turn back the clock on this development.[2]

Clausewitz devised his revision of *On War* to fit exactly into this context: the restoration of the balance of power in Europe combined with the superiority of defence, the last option of which was always people's war, prompted Clausewitz to develop an early theory of deterrence as the custodian of the status quo. Throughout his lifetime, he had considered theories of perpetual peace theoretically unconvincing and politically harmful. With the systematic integration of people's war into his theory of war, he had finally found an

[2] Cf. Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the Nation: Collective Identity in a German Axial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

alternative dynamic of war in the international system, and that was the defensive as the stronger form of war. Importantly, his theory of the deterrent value of the defensive broke with what he regarded as the exceeding rationalism of theories of perpetual peace. The deterrent value of people's war was built upon a theory of war that integrated the emotional side of human nature. People's war was feasible only if and when popular passions were unleashed. In this context, Clausewitz harkened back to anthropological and political convictions that he had held throughout his lifetime. In a sense, therefore, even the central transformation in Clausewitz's thought was characterized by a degree of continuity.

At the same time, this transformation has been often misunderstood. Important parts of the Clausewitz scholarship took the notion of the European balance of power, which became gradually more central in Clausewitz's oeuvre after 1815, and particularly after 1826–7, as indication that Clausewitz had adopted an increasingly 'r/Realist' outlook on war and international politics. However, this interpretation both is anachronistic and rides roughshod over the significant differences between Clausewitz's thought and twentieth-century Realism: in contrast to the rationalism of the latter, Clausewitz's approach to the European balance of power was broader than Realism's assumptions by integrating the power of popular passions into his device of defence and attack. Another aspect that has frequently been overlooked is the fact that Clausewitz's theory of war had significant moral implications: throughout his lifetime, Clausewitz had regarded people's war as a force for good and hence as a morally desirable strategic option (even though he was aware of the risks that people's war could slip into generalized civil war). During the reform years, people's war was the engine of individual, social, and political renewal. In the years 1827–31, people's war had become a custodian of the European state system. These implications were partly at odds with each other, but they reflected a change in the parameters of *Politik* in Clausewitz's lifetime just as much as they indicated an intellectual readjustment in Clausewitz's train of thought.

THE RECEPTION OF CLAUSEWITZ'S THEORY OF WAR: IRONIES OF MISUNDERSTANDING

The dominant stages of the Clausewitz reception in the Western world, as we have seen in Chapter 1, produced two misunderstandings. The first, associated with Wilhelminian strategic thought and Basil Liddell Hart's reading of Clausewitz, depicted Clausewitz as the 'Mahdi of Mass' and the apostle of total war. It had some plausibility, inasmuch as people's war as the baseline deterrent threat in the European state system had to hold the potential of a

full-blown escalation into 'total war'. However, whereas for Clausewitz this would occur in a defensive scenario, the German advocates of 'total war' increasingly harnessed the concept to an expansionist world view. The second was the cold-war interpretation of Clausewitz as the proponent of the subordination of war to state policy. Bizarrely, both interpretations were not only based on a distorted reading of Clausewitz; they also overlooked central points of Clausewitz's theory of war that were much closer to the mark of the respective strategic context.

Liddell Hart had implied that Clausewitz was the apostle of 'total war'; however; proponents of total war such as Ludendorff did not see themselves as followers of Clausewitz. When Ludendorff wrote in *Der Totale Krieg* that 'war and policy serve the survival of a people', he thought that he was challenging Clausewitz's theory of war, when in fact Clausewitz had made very similar statements in the context of his existential understanding of war. Of course, Ludendorff's idea of the 'survival of a people' was integrated into the context of a racist, expansionist, and ultimately imperial world view, whereas Clausewitz had argued from the point of view of defence against Napoleon's imperial and expansionist policies. But the escalation of people's war into absolute war, the idea that, once popular passions had been unleashed, war could be propelled to new extremes as policy faded into the background and the primordial violence of war asserted itself, was not entirely different from notions of total war.

Moreover, there were significant aspects of Clausewitz's work that German nationalists after the First World War could tap into. Both Hans Rothfels and Walter Malmsten Schering were aware of this. Rothfels was a German nationalist himself, even though he eventually had to flee from Germany owing to his Jewish heritage. Rothfels had always argued that Clausewitz's early writings were more important than *On War*. The appeal of the writings of the reform years for Rothfels was clearly their vitalism and their call for heroic action. He drafted *Politik und Krieg* during the First World War and revised it under the impression of what in German conservative revolutionary circles was referred to as the 'catastrophe of 1918'. The parallels between 1806 and 1918 were compelling for Rothfels.[3] In his programmatically entitled 1941 edition of Clausewitz's writings *Geist und Tat*, Walther Malmsten Schering presented a reading of Clausewitz that contained unabashed echoes of Nazi ideology. The heroism and vitalism of the early writings feature prominently. 'In the free play of the forces, in the variegated back and forth of possibilities, of chance and probability, combat [*der Kampf*] features as the sole element of life in which the moral forces of man can assert themselves,' wrote Malmsten Schering.[4]

[3] Jan Eckel, *Hans Rothfels: Eine intellektuelle Biographie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 33ff.

[4] Malmsten Schering (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz: Geist und Tat*, 216.

The mainstream cold-war interpretation of Clausewitz featured the same puzzling dynamic of latching onto one aspect of Clausewitz's work—the primacy of policy over war and strategy—and presenting a highly one-sided reading of it, while neglecting other, more relevant, links. The 1976 Howard and Paret translation of *On War* has been challenged for imposing a reading on Clausewitz that was both rationalized and politically sanitized. The existential concept of war, the role of emotions, and the significance of people's war were marginalized in this presentation of Clausewitz's magnum opus. In his introductory essay to the Howard and Paret edition of *On War*, Bernard Brodie swiftly declared Clausewitz as a mastermind of nuclear strategy: 'Clausewitz is probably as pertinent to our times as most of the literature specifically written about nuclear war.' What rendered Clausewitz so relevant was 'his tough-minded pursuit of the idea that war in all its phases must be rationally guided by meaningful political purposes'.[5] The analysis presented in the preceding chapters has highlighted once more that this is a highly reductionist interpretation of Clausewitz's intellectual universe, if more proof was needed. However, it has also demonstrated that Brodie's interpretation missed a more important link between nuclear strategy and Clausewitz's thought: defence as the stronger side of war and the nascent concept of deterrence, which resulted from this insight. Brodie's blind spot is understandable, however, inasmuch as deterrence in Clausewitz's time and deterrence during the cold war were based on fundamentally different dynamics. Clausewitz's nascent ideas on deterrence were based on the conviction that the ultimate threat of a popular insurrection on the part of the *defender* would dissuade any attacker. It was deterrence by denial that Clausewitz had in mind: a defensive people's war would prevent the attacker from reaping the fruits of victory on the battlefield. In contrast, the deterrent power of the nuclear threat hinged upon the destruction of the *attacker's* civilian population and infrastructure. It was based mainly on deterrence by punishment.

CLAUSEWITZ'S RELEVANCE TODAY

If the existing Clausewitz scholarship has been beset by the problem of constructing an 'updated' and contemporarily 'relevant' understanding of Clausewitz at the cost of reductionist interpretations, how are these pitfalls to be avoided in new studies? Clausewitz wrote primarily with a view to Prussia's situation in the early nineteenth century. Can his perspective be translated to the twenty-first-century strategic context?

[5] Bernard Brodie, 'The Continuing Relevance of On War', in Clausewitz, *On War*, 51.

The book's main aim has been to show that Clausewitz developed his theory of war from the basis of his understanding of small war, and that this process culminated in the final integration of people's war into his theory of major war after 1826–7. It has, therefore, refuted Mary Kaldor's argument that Clausewitz had nothing to say about what she refers to as the 'new wars'. Yet, this does not mean that we can resurrect Clausewitz as the paradigmatic thinker of small war, whose thought is immediately relevant today. Instead, we have to take a step back and focus on the questions that Clausewitz posed rather than on the 'wisdom' that he passed on. Two aspects are particularly relevant in this respect: Clausewitz's nascent ideas on deterrence and his observation on the effects of the transformation of *Politik* on war.

The Dilemmas of Deterrence

As noted in the previous section, Clausewitz's nascent ideas on deterrence have been largely missed in the existing scholarship, primarily owing to the fact that they are hard to translate into a twentieth- and twenty-first-century strategic context. Partly, the twenty-first-century strategic debate about deterrence itself is steeped in its cold-war roots. A 2015 report by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), for instance, deplored that deterrence was often thought of in the reductionist framework of nuclear deterrence.[6] Nuclear deterrence, however, with its focus on deterrence by punishment, is alien to Clausewitz's notion of deterrence.

Yet, beneath the dominant equation of deterrence with nuclear deterrence, cold-war strategic discourses did consider conventional deterrence. At the same time as Paret and Howard published their translation of *On War*, critics of nuclear deterrence debated the possibility of a conventional, 'non-offensive defence'. The prime origin of these debates was West Germany, which, owing to its exposed geopolitical situation, would be the first casualty in case of a failure of nuclear deterrence. The idea of a 'non-offensive defence' was based on the conviction that nuclear deterrence provided large incentives for pre-emptive strikes and inadvertent crisis escalation. What was needed, advocates of non-offensive defence, such as Horst Afheldt, argued was a defensive posture that could reduce these risks by moving away from nuclear deterrence and by adopting a strategic and operational stance that ensured that each side in an adversarial dyad should be superior to the opponent's *offensive* capabilities in terms of its own *defensive* capabilities.[7] By distinguishing between

[6] Peter Roberts and Andrew Hardie, *The Validity of Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2015), 1.

[7] Horst Afheldt, *Verteidigung und Frieden* (Munich: Hanser, 1976).

offensive and defensive capabilities, it was hoped that the risk of arms races and incentives for pre-emptive military action could be removed.[8]

While this idea did not gain much traction politically, conventional deterrence had already entered the framework of key strategic concerns with the USA's and NATO's move from massive retaliation to flexible response in the mid-1960s. Flexible response implied the importance of deterrence and escalation capabilities at the conventional end of the military spectrum in order to counter a potential Warsaw Pact aggression carried out with conventional forces. Academic analyses such as John J. Mearsheimer's *Conventional Deterrence* (1983) followed suit.[9] The interest in conventional deterrence has survived into the 'second nuclear age', as, since the end of the cold war, the West has frequently found itself in political confrontations with non-nuclear states. Nuclear deterrence against non-nuclear states has been shown to increase the risk of 'crises, uses of force, fatalities and war'.[10] In these conflicts, conventional deterrence has been considered as vital.[11]

Both 'non-offensive defence' and conceptions of conventional deterrence share with Clausewitz's nascent concept of the deterrence that they are geared towards denial rather than punishment. While conventional forces could be—and have often been—used in a punitive campaign, the conventional deterrence literature that has emerged since the 1970s has emphasized that conventional deterrence by denial is superior to using the conventional deterrent as a means of punishment.[12] Yet, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century concepts of conventional deterrence by denial differ radically in terms of their strategic scenarios from those that Clausewitz had in mind. Conventional deterrence is focused on the ability to deny the opponent the achievement of a quick surprise victory. It requires a semi-permanent or permanent contingent of forward-deployed forces that are capable of thwarting a potential aggression. In contrast, Clausewitz advocated a retreat into the interior of the country and the mounting of a slow but determined popular insurgency. The likelihood that such a scenario will recur in Europe or the broader West in the foreseeable future is remote.

[8] Cf. Bjørn Møller, 'Common Security and Non-Offensive Defence as Guidelines for Defence Planning and Arms Control?', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 1/2 (1976), 47–66.

[9] John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[10] Robert Rauchhaus, 'Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53/2 (2009), 273.

[11] Michael S. Gerson, 'Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age', *Parameters*, 39/3 (2009), 32–48.

[12] Cf. Edward Rhodes, 'Conventional Deterrence', *Comparative Strategy*, 19/3 (2000), 221–53. On the preferability of denial to punishment more generally, see Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), and Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

Small wars, people's wars, and insurgencies are commonly seen as the predominant type of warfare in the twenty-first century. Yet, the theatres of war are not Western countries, but countries in the peripheries of the international system or those located in spheres of intense power competition, such as Ukraine. In the immediate post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the West acted as counter-insurgent, not as insurgent. The result was sobering and limited the desire for future ground-war conflagrations. In Libya, Syria, and Iraq since 2014, the West has backed insurgent forces and has used them as auxiliaries. Yet, this was done with a view not of deterrence, but of tilting the overall balance of power in the country and in the region towards actors that the West deemed friendlier to its political agenda or at least less inimical to it.

Clausewitz cannot be harnessed to practising or studying small wars in such circumstances. His analysis of small war originated in a fundamentally different context. Neither can his thought on deterrence simply be stretched to the twenty-first century. The concept of deterrence would benefit from a systematic approach that takes into account the political levers through which deterrence works. Yet, it is hard to see how the idea of people's war against an expansionist European invader and a defence in depth could be part of such an enterprise, not least because the configuration of Clausewitz's trinity of the government, the military, and the people has changed fundamentally.

The Transformation of the Trinity

Clausewitz lived at a time when the configuration of war, *Politik*, and society underwent its first significant transformation in modern times. In fact, his theorizing was motivated by the observation of this transformation. Emotions/passion had once again inserted themselves into the realm of war. This had changed the parameters of both war and *Politik*. However, the effects of this change were neither one-dimensional nor linear, Clausewitz argued. Clausewitz regarded the years between 1792 and 1815 as both exceptional and path-breaking for the future. The way in which Napoleon had waged war was an exception to the rule, even though it was a stark warning that, even among civilized states, war could unleash the unbridled force of its *Urbestimmung*, its primordial violence and hatred. However, Clausewitz still thought that, after 1815, France had been reined in and the large-scale national mobilization for offensive purposes would remain an exceptional historical occurrence, even though Clausewitz remained wary of the option of a French resurgence, as his 1831 writings on the Polish question demonstrate.[13] Yet, the lasting legacy of

[13] 'Owing to its nature as a very homogenous, undivided, well-placed and well-guarded, rich, bellicose and inspired people, even a disarmed, defeated France will never cease to retain the

the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was not imperialism and nationalistic expansionism, even though that always remained a possibility—it was that people's war, defined as a defensive popular insurrection against foreign occupation, had irrevocably entered the parameters of war and strategy in the nineteenth century.

Clausewitz's assessment would prove right over the course of the nineteenth century. The post-restoration political elites in Europe hoped that they had overcome the eruptions of people's war, that they had, in other words, successfully broken the link between war and revolution. However, that was not the case: in the second half of the nineteenth century, people's war asserted itself once again in the American Civil War (1861–65) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71). This long-lasting transformation, the permanent insertion of people's war into the realm of war, strategy, and *Politik*, had profound repercussions both for the domestic political process of states and for the international order. Popular opinion had become an important factor in war, but its effects were non-linear. It could both limit and delimit war. The truth could only be 'felt out', as Clausewitz repeatedly remarked. The influence of *Politik* on war had become more complex under these circumstances. It has often been noted that Clausewitz nowhere clearly defined what he meant by *Politik*.[14] However, Clausewitz's lack of a clear definition is as much an indication of the ways in which *Politik* changed and evolved during his lifetime, as it is proof that Clausewitz struggled to keep up intellectually with this development. Important political divisions were just about to emerge: the distinction between liberalism and conservatism, monarchism and republicanism, democracy and absolutism, but also between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. At the same time, even though *Politik* itself had become more complex during his lifetime, Clausewitz had hoped that, by interweaving *Politik* and war more closely after 1827, he had found a more straightforward way to analyse war. In all the myriad forces that are at play in war, a comprehensive theory of war should focus on the political ones, since they were likely to be decisive. This is why the general, if he displayed the qualities required in a military genius, had to think like a statesman.

Clausewitz calls our attention to the question of how changes in the configuration of society and *Politik* impact upon war and vice versa at a time when this configuration is once again being transformed. Most Western states have at some point since the 1970s transformed their armed forces from

resources which guarantee its continued self-reliance and independence […] it can lose them for a moment, when it is tempted into foolish enterprises, but it will regain them in some measure automatically' (Clausewitz, 'Die Verhältnisse Europas seit der Teilung Polens', 228).

[14] E.g. Anders Palmgren, 'Clausewitz's Interweaving of *Krieg* and *Politik*', in *Clausewitz: The State and War*, ed. Herberg-Rothe, Honig, and Moran, 49–69.

mass citizen–soldier armies to smaller, professional forces.[15] Even though this has obviously weakened the personal bond between soldiers and citizens, it has not necessarily broken the affective bond between Western societies and their armed forces, as survey data and the success of armed forces charities have shown.[16] However, while Western democratic publics continue to show a large degree of solidarity based on a seemingly affective bond with their armed forces, they do not necessarily display enthusiasm for the military strategies of their governments. Long periods of apparent indifference towards questions of war and strategy are punctuated by short outbursts of approval or disapproval. This has led some to predict that, in the twenty-first century, war will be largely waged 'without the people'.[17] Others have questioned whether the cosmopolitanism that played at least a part in many recent Western military operations is capable of engendering a degree of emotional commitment to war on the part of the public.[18] Does only nationalism engender strong support for war? Is a decline in nationalism and popular passion regarding war a positive development? Or is it a contributing factor in the strategic paradox that was at the heart of many recent Western military operations, in which governments over-promised on the ends of the war (upholding human rights, establishing the rule of law, safeguarding civilization) while under-committing on the means?

Clausewitz alerts us to the importance of the aspect of emotions in war. War is still waged by human beings, even though in some areas technology is increasingly pushing the human 'out of the loop'. However, emotions and their role in war are rarely ever studied in a systematic fashion. The way in which the connection between war and emotions has featured in strategic studies to date has largely focused on the 'pathological' dimensions of emotions and war. In recent research, members of the armed forces have featured either as victims of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or as suffering from emotions of guilt and shame more generally.[19] Alternatively, they have been

[15] Cf. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal (eds), *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Anthony King, *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces: From the Rhine to Afghanistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[16] Lindsey A Hines et al., 'Are the Armed Forces Supported and Understood by the Public? A View from the United Kingdom', *Armed Forces & Society*, 41/4 (2015), 688–713.

[17] Pascal Vennesson, 'War without the People', in *The Changing Character of War*, ed. Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 241–58.

[18] Cheyney Ryan, 'The Dilemma of Cosmopolitan Soldiering', in *Heroism and the Changing Character of War: Toward Post-Heroic Warfare?*, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 120–41.

[19] Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War* (London: Edgar Jones, 2005); Ben Shepard, *War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists, 1914–1994* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000); Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sherman, *The Untold War: Inside the Hearts and Minds of Our Soldiers* (London: W. W. Norton, 2011).

explored as groups of individuals that have been socialized into deviant and immoral behaviour by the experience of war.[20] While these studies are, of course, valuable in their own right, they do not address the question of how emotions feature in the context of the Clausewitzian trinity of the government, war, and the people.

Emotions, Clausewitz observed, were deeply interwoven with political and military processes. However, we know very little about the way in which emotions play a role in war and strategy-making in late-modern Western democracies. There are starting points for a debate and research that could feed into it, without, however, directly addressing the issue of emotions.[21] Research on combat motivation has a long tradition.[22] The field of war commemoration, partly driven by the centenary of the First World War, has gained renewed interest. Moreover, the emerging research on war and gender roles could contribute to this debate.[23] Taking Clausewitz's call for the integration of emotions into the study of war seriously could bring these diverse strands together in a broader context. This is relevant in so far as the ongoing transformation of the trinity of the government, the people, and the military expresses itself significantly, if not predominantly, in the dimension of emotions. In other words, if we leave this dimension unexplored, we risk missing insights that could shed light on the current paradoxes and dilemmas in the area of war and democracy.

History: Change or Continuity?

In asking the question of whether Clausewitz is still relevant today, we hold him to his own standard. He set himself the task of writing a 'universal' theory of war. Yet, in contrast to what Clausewitz saw as the mechanical transcendentalism and/or progressivism of the Enlightenment, his universal theory had to accommodate historical change. Theory had to provide 'clear ideas

[20] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in the Twentieth Century* (London: Granta, 1999); Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldiers: German POWs on Fighting, Killing, and Dying* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2011).

[21] There is also an emerging body of scholarship on emotions in International Relations, which could serve as a conceptual starting point for the analysis of emotions in strategic studies. Cf. Neta Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships', *International Security*, 24/4 (2000), 116–56; Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker, 'Theorizing Emotions in World Politics', *International Theory*, 6/3 (2014), 491–514; Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchinson, 'Fear no More: Emotions and World Politics', *Review of International Studies*, 34/1 (2008), 115–35.

[22] Cf., for an overview, Anthony King, *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[23] E.g. Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); Victoria Basham, 'Gender, Race, Militarism and Remembrance: The Everyday Geopolitics of the Poppy', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23/6 (2016), 883–96.

about the essential [*das Notwendige*] in the continuous context'.[24] Theory had to concentrate on war in its absolute form, partly because the Napoleonic Wars served as cautionary tale, but equally importantly because the internal coherence of war in its absolute form served as the main 'orientation mark' (*Richtpunkt*) for the study of war.[25] A theory of war as a whole had to guide the enquiry into its constituent, historical incarnations. In other words, the applicability of Clausewitz's theory of war had to transcend history precisely because it took historical change into account.

It is undeniable that some parts of Clausewitz's theory have an enduring appeal in the contemporary strategic discourse. Clausewitz's trinity is timeless and relevant across different cultures and forms of political organization. As the previous subsection has demonstrated, it can be harnessed to a critical analysis of the state of war, democracy, and strategy in the twenty-first century. Yet, it would be wrong to reduce what Clausewitz understood as his theory of war to the trinity. His theory of war is obviously more complex than the trinity. Moreover, the trinity, taken in isolation, is no more than a conceptual tool—a way of thinking about war, not a 'theory' in itself. The usefulness of concepts such as the trinity, therefore, cannot be taken as proof of the enduring relevance of Clausewitz's theory of war.

In order to assess the problem of Clausewitz's relevance, it is helpful to enquire into how Clausewitz himself conceptualized history. The 1810 creation of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin was embedded in a larger process that unfolded across European universities around 1800, during which History as a discipline was emancipated from its secondary status in the canon of academic disciplines, which had hitherto been dominated by the four core disciplines of Theology, Law, Medicine, and Philosophy. In 1821, the driving force behind the creation of Friedrich Wilhelm University, Wilhelm von Humboldt, delivered an address to the Academy of Sciences in Berlin, entitled 'The Task of the Historian'. In it, Humboldt elevated the historian above the philosopher, because the historian had to accommodate reality and the flow of history into his study of ideas.[26] Historicism and the birth of History as an academic discipline in its own right hence co-evolved during a time that constituted something akin to an 'axial age', during which the new discipline defined its remit, its subject, and its methods.

The upshot of this was the coexistence of a myriad of different approaches to history and its study during Clausewitz's lifetime. The prevailing approach in military history at the time was what Clausewitz's colleague at the *Kriegsschule*, August Rühle von Lilienstern, referred to as the 'Socratic and

[24] Clausewitz, 'Nachricht', *Vom Kriege*, 182 (*On War*, 71).
[25] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 955; bk. VIII, ch. 2 (*On War*, 581).
[26] Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210.

applicatory method of instruction, inasmuch as it can be regarded as an incremental examination that accompanies the dogmatic message'.[27] History was taught as 'examples' and illustrations of dogma. History as 'stories' also had a mnemonic function with regard to dogma. Clausewitz was critical of this approach and feared that examples could be misused to 'prove' a dogma that could just as easily be disproven with a different example.[28] Yet he himself is partly guilty of using and misusing history in precisely that way in his writings.

If Clausewitz found the 'applikatorische Methode' faulty, Enlightenment transcendentalism and progressivism were no viable alternatives. The progressivism of the Enlightenment was the constant target of Clausewitz's criticism, not least because it had voiced hopes for an imminent age of perpetual peace. An emerging alternative to the Enlightenment's progressivism was the neoclassicism of figures such as Winckelmann, Lessing, and even Humboldt. They regarded ancient Greece as the lost golden age of culture and humanity, which modernity can strive to imitate, but will never reach. In contrast, Clausewitz's perspective on history was not a moral one: history cannot be judged and neither can it be used for moral education. Neither did Clausewitz follow hermeneutic approaches such as the historical individualism of the classicist F. A. Wolf, who had an important influence on Humboldt. According to Wolf, historical periods such as ancient Greece had to be studied strictly in their own context.[29] Clausewitz's interest in history was oriented much more towards a comparative perspective than towards the individualism of philology and hermeneutics. A final trait that helps us to locate Clausewitz's understanding of history was that he did not share the teleological view of history that Herder had espoused with his notion of providence,[30] nor indeed Hegel's notion of the world spirit realizing itself through history.

Clausewitz's view of history bears traces of a plausible engagement with the emerging historicism of Herder and Humboldt. Clausewitz had most likely discussed Herder and his ideas of a 'national character' when he stayed at Coppet in the company of Mme de Staël and A. W. Schlegel. In 'The Task of the Historian', Humboldt had argued that 'the historian begins from particular facts and then attempts to justify general principles a posteriori from them'.[31] In other words, the historian differentiates the essential from the accidental. He seeks identity in the flow of different historical embodiments of the same phenomenon. In contrast to the task of the philosopher, who developed theoretical concepts a priori, the historian's task consisted in the constant

[27] August Otto Rühle von Lilienstern, *Historiographische Skizze des preussischen Staates im synchronistischen Verhalten zu seinen Nachbaarstaaten innerhalb des Zeitraums 1280 bis 1830 n. Chr* (Berlin: E. E. Mittler, 1838), 475.

[28] Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 339; bk. II, ch. 6 (*On War*, 172).

[29] Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 183.

[30] Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 135.

[31] Quoted in Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 209.

mediation between general principles and empirical data. The similarities between Humboldt's perspective as he developed it in the 'Task of the Historian' and Clausewitz's own understanding of history are striking: 'Analysis and observation, philosophy and experience, must never be in contempt of each other, nor must they exclude each other; they support each other.'[32]

So war was subject to change for Clausewitz; but change was an opportunity for the student of war, because it put the essentials of war, which existed among and underneath its historically contingent forms, into sharper relief. History changed war, but Clausewitz did not stop there. War changed history too. In the context of Romantic discourses on war, war often featured as both an interface and a turning point that connected and separated the past from the future. War itself, in other words, was perceived as an engine for historical change. Friedrich Schiller, whose understanding of history was based on the idea of a 'triadic' model of history, in which a golden age of humanity had given way to modern cultural decline, thought that war could propel modern civilizations towards a new Humanist era. In this context, historical change is charged with notions of cultural, political, and social utopia.[33] These tendencies are clearly reflected in Clausewitz's writings from the reform years.

Even though Clausewitz emphasized the need for a universal theory of war and the importance of identity within historical difference, he was much more interested in change than in continuity. This is unsurprising, given that he lived through times of unprecedented change in Europe. But Clausewitz's interest in change had intellectual as well biographical roots. Change was always potentially change to a better future. Even the mature Clausewitz who became increasingly concerned about the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe regarded change as a given and did not decry it as an anomaly of history. The task of those who made strategy was to negotiate change and to try to shape the course of events, rather than to suppress it.

Herein lies the largest chasm between Clausewitz's theory of war and contemporary strategic discourses in Western states. Today strategy is overwhelmingly conceptualized as an instrument that allows us to maintain stability and continuity. Arguably, military force has been used to effect regime change in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. Yet, local change was supposed to serve the overarching goal of maintaining the stability of the international order. The ideal of the future is modelled on the continuation of the present. Change is relegated to the past: we are often told that we live in an era that is radically different from the pre-nuclear, pre-new wars, pre-information technology age. Clausewitz has featured in two alternative guises in the context of these strategic discourses: either as a theorist of the 'old

[32] Clausewitz, 'Author's Preface', *Vom Kriege*, 184 (*On War*, 61).

[33] Cf. Martina Lüke, *Worte wie Waffen: Krieg und Romantik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

wars', who is now obsolete, or as a theorist of continuity rather than change, a perspective that is embodied in the mantra-like repetition of his dictum of war as the *continuation* of policy by other means.

Whether Clausewitz's theory of war will remain hard to integrate into contemporary strategic discourses will depend on history itself. The predominance of continuity over change and the use of war to prevent global change are strong undercurrents of our times, but it is far from clear that Western militaries and their regional partners will be able to uphold the global status quo over decades to come. Historical change—its depth, its extent, and its repercussions—are mainly visible in hindsight. Clausewitz may be more relevant today than we realize.

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